



Spring 2022

Can You Dig It?

Welcome to our spring edition of *Can You Dig It?* the Horticulture and more newsletter produced by the Horticulture Committee. This issue is going to take a slightly different track....as Editor I asked all of our writers to concentrate their articles on various aspects of trees....and I know you will be pleased and surprised about the various ways each committee member took on this assignment.

Now you might ask— why trees? Well, as you start to read through the various articles you will see that this year seems to be the “Year of the Tree,” so sit back, grab that cup of coffee and read on!

We hope you enjoy this issue. We will be back again in a few months sharing even more topics and diversified articles.

Trish, Horticulture Committee Chair

“Let us break from engrossing tasks of every kind and linger for a while among the trees and shrubs of woodside and woodland, drink in cool draughts of fresh air, revel in the galaxy of color. Benificent nature so lavishly displays on every side.”

E.H. Wilson

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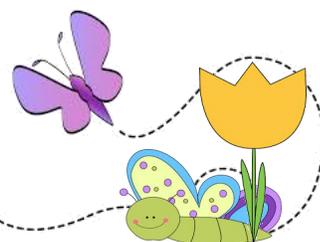
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Published by Talbot County Garden Club



Trees—Nature’s Foundation

* Lin Moeller

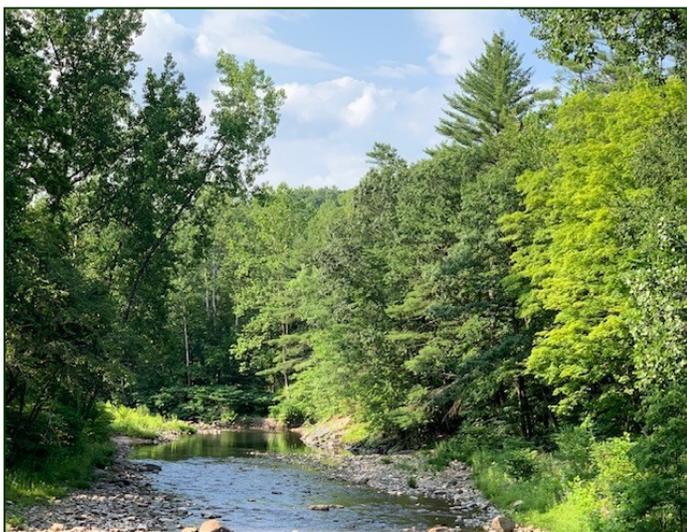
I have always loved trees, their stateliness and beauty, especially deciduous trees. As a child, riding the school bus in Connecticut, I would look out at the treed hillside in spring slowly leafing-out in a patchwork of light green hues that slowly changed to



the darker summer green. In the summer, the huge old maples towering over the house provided a grand, cool shade and gentle breeze.

(We didn’t have air conditioning; it really wasn’t needed!) The autumn months brought a blanket of reds, yellows and oranges across the hills. As trees dropped their leaves to blanket the ground, it was a time to play in them. It was later that I learned the benefits of leaving them where they fell, though in yards we still rake and remove.

Here on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, trees were not always looked upon as being a beneficial, essential part of the environment. In colonial Maryland, agriculture was the livelihood; trees were in the way. Therefore, they were cut down as the land was cleared for fields. Trees were used for the



building of homes, barns and ships, and for cooking and heating homes. (Actually about 80% of the land

of the Atlantic Seaboard Colonies was deforested by the later 1700s.) Man had changed the environment. The majority of the forested woodland areas were gone. There were few trees to hold back and absorb the rainwater and curb the sediment runoff into the waterways. The creeks and inlets of many Eastern Shore waterways slowly silted-in, as with those around Talbot County, the Miles and Tred Avon Rivers. Today, nutrient and sediment run-offs still cloud and muddy the waters.

Across the seasons, trees are essential to the environment – the air, the waterways, and the ground in which they reside. Four hundred years ago forested woodland areas covered the Bay’s watershed right to its shoreline. It created a canopy of coolness during the summer months while also absorbing carbon dioxide, giving off oxygen and providing a habitat for wildlife.



Beneath the canopy, on the forest’s floor, was a thick carpet of dense matted leaves, layered from past seasons and slowly decomposing, creating a rich, sustaining, composted soil. When heavy rains fell upon the woodlands, they were first slowed by the canopy of leaves. As the wetness dripped off the leaves to the ground below, it had been further slowed. Reaching the forest floor, it was a trickle, slowly passing through the layers of decomposing leaves to be absorbed by the matting of roots and soil. There was very little runoff into the tributaries of the Bay and that which did flow was low in nutrients and sediment.

Tom Horton, an environmentalist and educator at Salisbury University wrote in one of his Bay Journal columns, “Forests let the rains soak in and meter them back through groundwater during droughts, in effect stabilizing the Bay against flashy weather better than any other land use.”

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The three native trees planted by our garden club in Idlewild Park in recognition of the 200th birthday of Frederick Law Olmstead, will over the course of their lives provide benefits to the Bay, and help to sustain wildlife and to curb climate change. As part of the Bay's Clean-up Program, for years farmers and waterfront homeowners have been encouraged

to plant trees, vegetative buffers to absorb nutrient and sediment rich run-off.

As we look to the future, trees for their beauty and sustaining benefits to the environment are essential. They are nature's foundation, a phenomenal resource of which we need more. We all need to continue planting native trees.  (Photos by Lin Moeller)



Pennsylvania Horticulture Society (PHS) Gold Medal Trees of the Year *** Susie Middleton**

The PHS Gold Medal Plant Program* is a resource for anyone looking for the perfect tree, shrub, vine, or perennial plant to add to their garden. Gold Medal Plants have been selected for their ease of cultivation, multiple seasons of interest, commercial availability, and appropriateness for the Mid-Atlantic region, and value to wildlife.

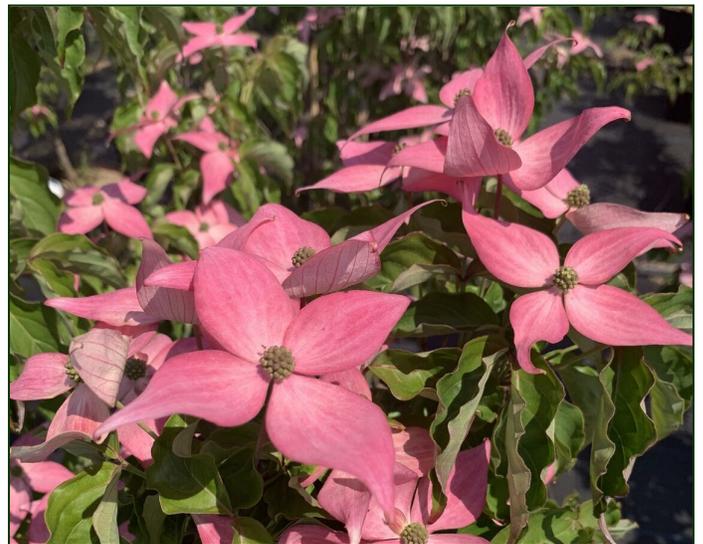
**What Makes a Plant a "Gold Medal Plant"? Each year, PHS convenes nursery owners, horticulturists, expert gardeners, and professional growers to conduct a review of both newly available and classic species and cultivars, selecting the best performing and most beautiful for inclusion in the Gold Medal Program.*



Acer x freemanii Autumn Blaze®, Freeman maple

A large native shade tree that has spectacular orange-red fall foliage. This native cultivar will cool surrounding temperatures, benefiting the environment

by attracting native birds. It is also deer resistant. Autumn Blaze® is tolerant of dry and wet soils. It is hardy to zones 4-8.



Cornus kousa Scarlet Fire®, Kousa dogwood

A flowering dogwood with magnificent, fuchsia-colored flowers. Scarlet Fire® adapts very well in many different climates and soils. It is a medium-growing tree that blooms within two years of being planted. Scarlet Fire® is a relatively new addition to the ornamental landscape with its deer and disease resistant tolerance. It is hardy to zones 5-8. 

Source: <https://phsonline.org/for-gardeners/gold-medal-plants>

Interested in finding more plants from their list? Go to <https://join.phsonline.org/goldmedalplant>. Note that by submitting your contact information to PHS, you agree to receive communications from PHS and can unsubscribe at any time by email.



My Love Affair with the Double File Viburnum * Trish Reynolds



Viburnum plicatum var. *tomentosum*, or Doublefile Viburnum (photo by Trish Reynolds)

Now how can you not fall in love with this beauty....we have grown this fabulous tree as a specimen in our picking garden lovingly named after my Grandmother, “Naner’s Garden.” Each spring Tom and I wait for the leaves and the green early flowers to begin. We check it each day and watch its progress to the white flowers you see above. The layer branches are just covered with these beautiful flowers lasting easily a month.

On our evening walks around the property we always walk by this special place, and on a night where there is a bit of moonlight this tree shines as a quiet statue of the night. And when the petals fall, as fall they must, the ground is covered with a “white snowfall.”



Photo by Trish Reynolds



As the seasons move from spring to summer, the red berries of this tree become a magnet for bees and butterflies. Loaded with these bright red berries, they are also attractive to cedar waxwings, sparrows, mockingbirds, thrushes and a variety of other song birds. More reasons to love this tree!

A few facts about this Tree, (some also consider it a large shrub)....it is a horizontally branched, deciduous small tree native to China and Japan. Along its branches in mid-spring bloom double rows of flattened clusters of sterile florets resembling lace-capped hydrangea flowers. It will grow 8 to 10’ high, by 10-15’ wide, with a growth rate of 1-2’ a year. Plant in full to partial sun and water regularly – weekly or more often in extreme summer heat. 🌸

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ARBOR DAY

* Kim Eckert

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Tree Planter's *Holiday, Arbor Day, in the United States*. The first US Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska on April 10, 1872, after being proposed by the secretary of the Nebraska Territory, J. Sterling Morton.

Arbor Day, almost called Sylvan Day, coming from the Latin word “Silva,” meaning “of the forest” or “woodland.” Morton decided against this name because he wanted to include all types of trees, not just forest trees. By 1920, over 45 US states were observing Arbor Day.

Although most research indicates the first Arbor Day was in Nebraska in 1872, it was not. The first documented Arbor Day was celebrated in the Spanish village of Mondoñedo in 1594! They planted lime and horse-chestnut trees. Today, at least 44 countries worldwide celebrate Arbor Day each year.

Upon the 100th anniversary of US Arbor Day, The *Arbor Day Foundation* was formed. It has been inspiring people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees since 1972. The specific day varies from state to state, depending on general weather patterns. In Maryland, we celebrate on the last Friday in April which is **April 29th** this year. In contrast, Hawaii celebrates it on the first Saturday in November.

LIFE

Star Democrat article about TCHS participating in Arbor Day.

ARBOR DAY

Town, garden club mark Arbor Day with tree planting

EASTON — On April 9 to observe Arbor Day, the Town of Easton installed three bald cypress trees near the gazebo in Idlewild Park. The trees were provided by the Talbot County Garden Club to honor America's great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th Birthday.

Olmsted's notable public green spaces include New York's Central Park and Washington's Rock Creek Park. Easton's Idlewild Park reflects Olmsted's spirit as it offers recreational opportunities and enjoyment to many people. Honoring Olmsted is an initiative of the Garden Club of America, with which the Talbot County Garden Club is affiliated.

In a proclamation, Mayor Robert Willey urged all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day by recognizing the many benefits that trees provide, and by planting and caring for trees for the well-being of this and future generations.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Taking part in the Arbor Day tree planting event were, front, from left, Talbot County Garden Club Vice President Maribeth Lane, TCGC President Carolyn Rugg, Easton Mayor Robert Willey and former TCGC President/current Easton Tree Board Member Chloe Pitard; and Easton Public Works Department staff, back, from left, Logan Lyons, Mike Young, Barry Slaughter and Kevin Hackett.



Amelanchier arborea - Serviceberry Tree



Quercus alba, White Oak. Source

References: *Homestead Gardens-Blog*, *History.com* Editors

Homestead Gardens-Blog

People across the world celebrate Arbor Day by planting trees, cleaning up natural areas and taking a day to focus on the value of trees. Trees offer so much to the environment by providing oxygen, improving air quality, conserving water, controlling erosion and offering a home and food to wildlife. Take time to cherish all the wonderful things trees offer and pick one to plant this year. Will it be the Maryland State tree, the White Oak? Perhaps one of the native trees that offer food and shelter to the wildlife, a Serviceberry or Cedar. Have fun and enjoy. 🌸



LEARNING ABOUT DECIDUOUS TREES THE HARD WAY

* Samantha McCall

Several months ago, when our fearless editor Trish announced that the coming issue of “*Can You Dig It*” was going to focus on trees, I was immediately transported back 20 years ago to a class I took at Longwood Gardens.

At the time, I was working on my Certificate of Ornamental Plants, which was an ambitious curriculum of 10 classes that offered the lofty distinction of recognizing the detailed study of over 500 plants upon completion.

The courses were designed for the serious gardener or professionals in the field who wished to expand their knowledge of horticulture in the mid-Atlantic region.

One class stands out forever in my memory: Deciduous Trees. Taught by John Frett, a professor of horticulture at the nearby University of Delaware, it was the most challenging class I took for the certificate over a two year period, which involved driving up to Longwood Gardens a couple times a week, pre-kids, of course.

The 2-hour one way trip usually took a little longer because I had a proclivity for wandering off the path. I’d stop in the tony little hamlet of Greenville where I’d grab lunch at Janssen’s Market. (I even met then Vice President Joe Biden there once. He was buying Haagan Daz vanilla ice cream with Jill and a trove of secret service. I bought that day’s special sandwich, a “Joe Biden panini.” But that’s another story for another day.)

And, after every class, I’d hop on Route 1 to make a bee line for J. Franklin Styer’s nursery (known today as Terrain) to buy specimens of what I had just learned about in class. I liked my routine.

During those commutes, I would listen to cassette tapes (anyone remember them?) I recorded of each tree, noting its identification hints, culture, growth habits and other details as well as the family name,

scientific name, cultivars and common name. You can be sure there was a matching stack of index cards listing the same information. I knew memorization was what was going to get me through this class.

The bonus of doing course work there was, as students, we frequently got to go behind the scenes and we had unlimited admission to the 1,000 plus acres of gardens, meadows and woodlands throughout the duration of the course. As a budding plant enthusiast, I couldn’t get up there often enough to take in the wonders of this extraordinary living classroom.

In addition to illustrated lectures, each class also included the not-to-be missed guided plant walks to examine the specimens we were studying up close and personal. It was an extra opportunity to reinforce what we were learning in our bulging notebooks.

Plant identification can be tricky business on a good day and mind you, this was long before cell phone apps like “Plant Snap” were even invented. It was far easier to recognize and study annuals and perennials in their peak season or small flowering trees in the spring thanks to their glorious colors, shapes and textures, than it was to identify deciduous trees IN THE FALL!!!

By that time, most of the leaves (but not all) had fallen from our subjects and we were forced to identify them by leaf buds setting for the next season, leaf scars, leaf shape for those still hanging on or under the tree bark, catkins, no catkins, and cones, just for starters.

It was one of the hardest classes I’ve ever taken because it required so much more than just memorization of details like light tolerance, soil conditions, pests and landscape uses, not to mention details like petioles, leaf shape and texture and habits.

Our senses were even invited to help study the leafless trees and every little trick or clue was greatly appreciated. Did you know that *Betula lenta* (cherry birch) smells like rootbeer when you scratch the twig or small branch? Or, the under bark of an Amur cork-tree reveals bright yellow wood?

Probably today, among the 75 trees on our plant list, there are a handful of trees I can still identify but not much more. An expert I do not claim to be but I can distinguish between an oak and a maple.



But how I love seeing the sycamore trees lining Oxford Road near Harleigh with their signature swaths of exfoliating bark or the Coral Bark Maple with bright orange red branches reaching skyward near the Talbot Interfaith Shelter in Easton. Pawlonia trees dot the edge of the fields along Route 50 in spring with their purple flowers and a circle of Honey Locust encircle the center of Thompson Park in downtown Easton.

My only regret was failing to consult my Deciduous Trees notebook



when I bought two river birch trees for the front of a house. “They are the messiest of trees,” noted John Frett. “Branches and twigs are always falling off and they grow to be very big.”

Lesson learned: plant them off in the distance where their bark and shape can be appreciated. They are not meant to be planted anywhere near a house unless you want the house uprooted in a few years.

By the way, I passed the class. Shew! 

Editor's Note: *Samantha's tale reads just like mine....I took the same courses, albeit a bit earlier, and had many of the same teachers, including Dr. Frett....and I just love every minute....he was a fabulous teacher. I also had him in my second Certificate program, Deciduous Trees II. I sure wish we had had all the sources discussed next in Nancy's article....but learning the way we did, seeing and touching, was the best for us! Thank you Samantha for taking me down memory lane.*



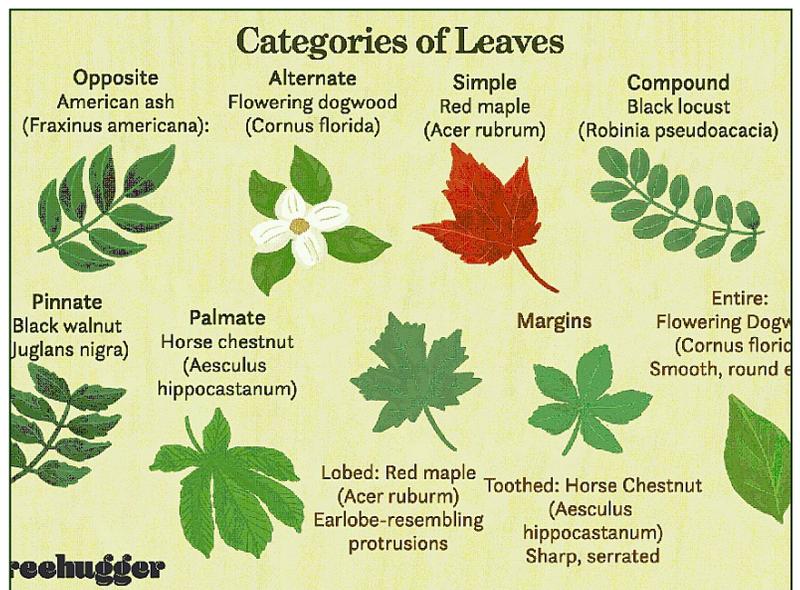
THE BEST APPS TO IDENTIFY TREES

* Nancy Laplante

With spring finally here we're all excited to get outside more and watch the beauty unfold. I love trees as they provide a haven for birds and insects, shade for all, and great interest to our landscapes. If you ever are challenged to identify a type of tree in your community or in your travels, know that there are some great apps to assist you. Consider the one that best meets your needs, download the app, and begin exploring and learning more about trees!

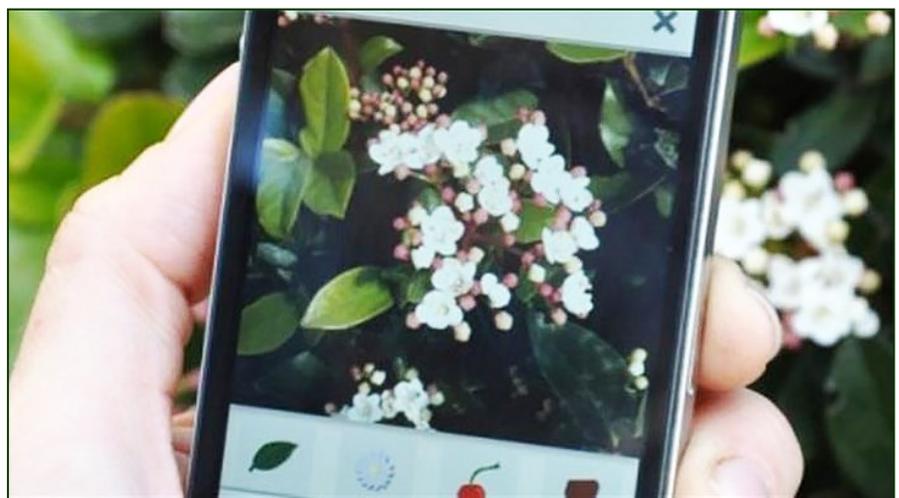
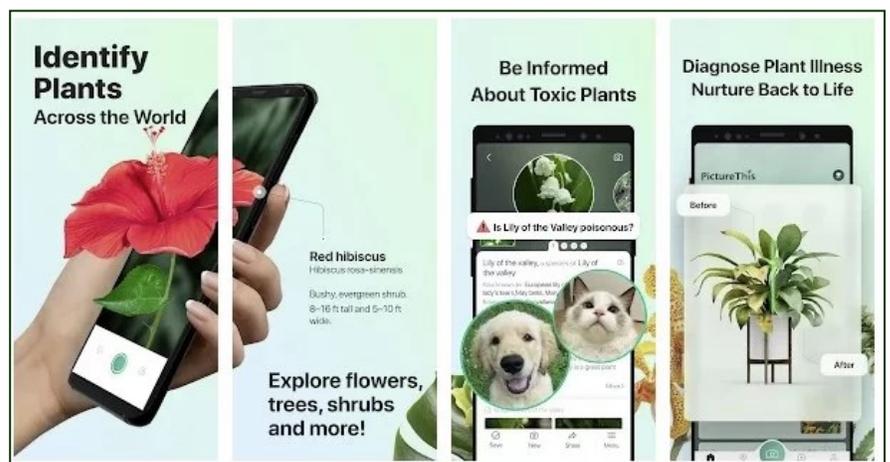
According to InsightWeeds, the 10 best tree identification apps for 2022 for iOS and Android are:

- **Forest Tree Identification:** Allows you to identify leaves, buds, and twigs. The app allows you to distinguish the features of trees and understand how tree properties change based on climates and regions.
- **Google Lens:** One of the best tree bark identification apps. This app is very easy to use, you take a picture and then tap on the lens button on your phone screen to identify it.
- **LeafSnap:** The original app includes trees found in the Northeastern United States



and Canada and can identify a tree by its leaves or bark. Additional field guides are being developed by researchers from Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and the Smithsonian Institution. The app will soon grow to include the trees of the entire continental United States.

- **NatureID:** You can identify a tree by its physical characteristics, you can also use it to find out more about a plant species by entering its name.
- **PictureThis:** Uses artificial intelligence to instantly identify a tree with an accuracy of up to 98%.
- **PlantSnap:** Allows you to identify over 600,000 types of plants, including succulents, trees, flowers, mushrooms, cacti, and more. With a photo of a tree, you will get information about the taxonomy of the tree and a complete description. The app also tells you how to grow the tree and take care of it.
- **Tree ID:** An interactive British tree identification app. The best app to use for identifying a tree by the bark. You can also use twigs, leaves, buds, fruits, or flowers to get more information about a tree you have seen. The app also has an A-Z guide that allows you to identify a tree by name, and discover more about each species with facts, folklore, history, and uses.
- **Virginia Tech Tree ID (vTree):** Contains fact sheets for over 1,000 woody plants from across North America. It gives an in-depth description, a range map, and thousands of color images of flowers, twigs, barks, leaves, fruits, and forms of trees. The app also allows you to search for species by keyword or identify a tree by answering a series of questions. 🌸



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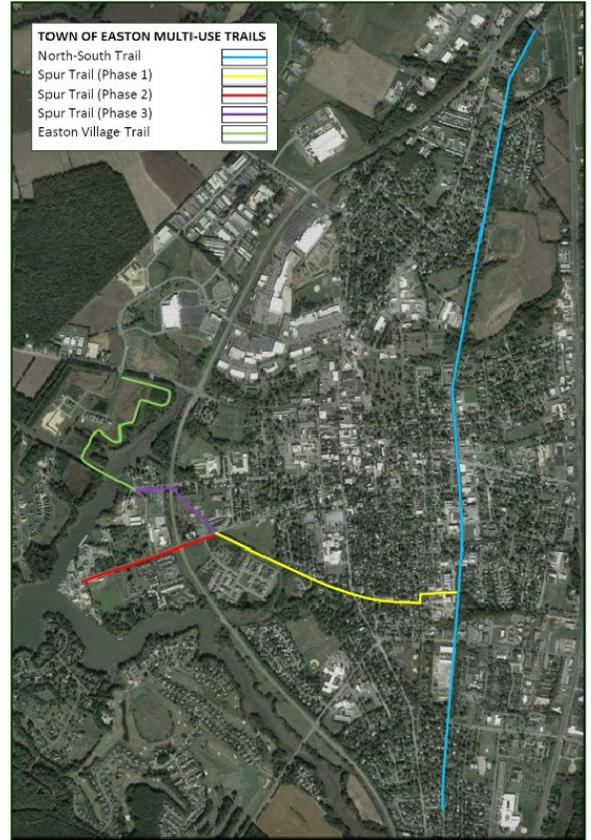
TCGC's NEW TREE PLANTING PROJECT: Enhancing Easton's Rail-Trail Spur

* Janet Mackey

Talbot County Garden Club is *stepping out* with a new garden project! We are designing and funding an area of trees and shrubs at the entrance to the Town of Easton's newly expanded Rails-to-Trails network right in the heart of the town. This initiative builds on the club's legacy of garden projects that contribute to the beauty of Easton.

The town opened the initial Rail-Trail in 1998 with 3-miles of multi-use trail along former railroad right-of-way running north-south through town (the blue line on the map). The Rail-Trail is popular with walkers, joggers, cyclists, and dog walkers.

In 2021 the town opened a footbridge across the Tred Avon at Glenwood Avenue that connects to a new trail adjacent to Easton Village that ends at St. Michaels Road (the light green line on the map). Today the town is building a spur trail running east-west (the yellow and purple lines on the map) that will connect the North-South trail to the Easton Village Trail, running right through town, by Third Haven Friends Meeting House and Moton Park.



Town of Easton Rail Trail System-Overview



“Our” project area is located at the eastern (right) end of this new spur trail, creating a significant entrance at Aurora St., just north of Idlewild Park (circled on the aerial view).

How did this project come about? Several club members began investigating opportunities for TCGC to plant trees in Easton as part of the club's celebration of Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th birthday

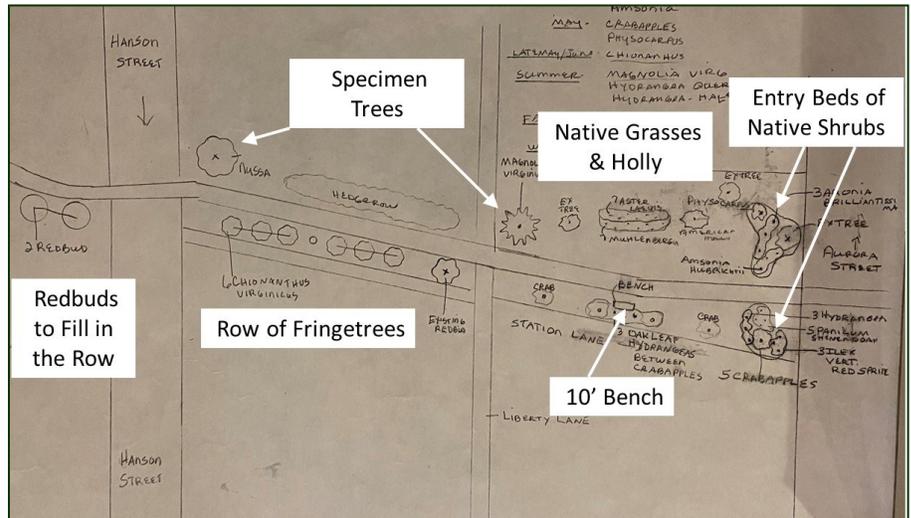
The Program Committee had arranged to plant trees in Idlewild Park near the outdoor pavilion as part of the club's April meeting. Maribeth Lane, Paige Connelly, Nancy Thompson, Caroline Benson, and Janet Mackey met with the Town Engineer, Rick Van Emburgh, to see if there was a good location to plant more trees.



When Rick introduced the possibility of planting trees on a portion of the new spur trail, our group was off and running. A beautiful entrance planting quickly took shape in our minds. We brought in Anne Jelich and Virginia Sappington to put structure to our thoughts, and they quickly produced a marvelous design.

The town was very excited to work with TCGC. The town has budgeted to *build* the spur trail right now. We were able to enhance the construction by designing a beautiful entrance to the new segment of trail that will stand out as people approach the trail. The town will prepare the planting beds, plant the trees and shrubs, and maintain the plantings. TCGC created the design and will purchase the plants and materials.

We will have two large beds of native shrubs, such as hydrangea, chokeberry, and winterberry, which will flank the trail adjacent to the sidewalk along Aurora St. where the new trail will start. We will place a large bench among the existing crabapple trees. It will be shaded by a magnificent tree in the neighboring yard to the south and will face a beautiful Southern magnolia in another neighboring yard. We will plant a large bed of native grasses, such as pink muhly grass, and an American holly to screen a neighbor's back yard. In the second block, we will plant a row of fringe trees to repeat the row of crabapples in the first block and the row of redbuds in the third block. We may add a second bench in the second block. We will plant two larger specimen trees – a Sweetbay Magnolia and a 'Wildfire' black gum – on the north side of the trail. We also will replace several small redbud trees that died in the third block, although that block is outside our initial project area.



The club is budgeting about \$12,000 for this project, \$9,000 in the first year (2022-23) and an additional \$3,000 in the second year (2023-24). The purchase of plants makes up about ¼ of the cost. Many of our club members probably have seen similar cost ratios for garden or landscaping work they have had done.

The railroad right-of-way that the spur trail follows presents a challenge because it is the location of a wide variety of buried utilities. We will work with the town to site the trees and other plantings where they will not interfere with the utility lines. Although one of the utilities is a water line, it is a large water main and cannot be tapped into to provide a water source for the trail plantings.



Standing on Aurora Street this winter, looking down the expanse of turf grass (as shown in the photo), one might not be very excited about a plan for a paved walking trail through the area.

When our little group of TCGC members gazed in that direction, though, visions of flowering shrubs, towering trees, and lovely benches filled our imaginations. This area called out for attention by TCGC to continue our history of contributing to the beautification of the town.

No sooner had we started talking about what we could do with these first two blocks than people started dreaming up improvements to other parts of the new

spur trail. Perhaps this will grow into an ongoing project that will engage the creativity and skills of additional TCGC members.

We have our “before” picture. Won’t it be fun to watch? 🌸

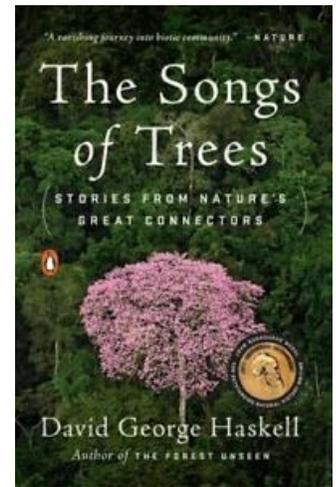
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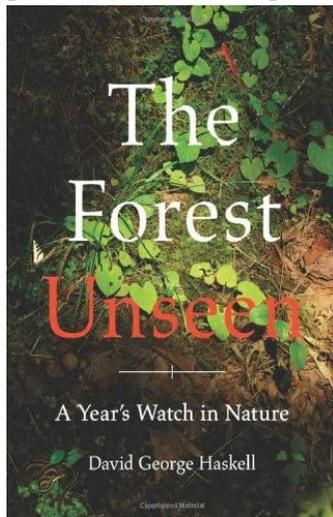
BOOK REVIEW, *Songs of Trees, Stories from Nature's Great Connectors* * Chloe Pitard

For many years our family has spent a month at a small summer community in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. The community founded by and still containing many active, committed Quakers has a deep interest in caring for the world we live in. *The Song of Trees*, by David George Haskell, published in 2017, was recently chosen by the Nature Center Book Club there as our spring selection. I have been delighted to read it. Each chapter takes as its theme a different tree that the author, David Haskell, has visited numerous times over a period of years. These are very different trees in very different parts of the world, and in one case a very different era of the earth. What Haskell does is investigate the web of interdependence and influence an individual tree has on its environment and, equally important, how that has changed over the years as the world has changed. The world changes include climate, the expansion of human settlement and the proliferation of things and various forms of life both flora and fauna that were once very local but have now spread world-wide.

Haskell was born in England and was mostly educated there. He has lived in the US for many years and is currently Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies at Sewanee, The University of the South, in Tennessee. His writing is beautiful, almost poetic. He is able to present fairly complex information in a very accessible way.



This book as well as a later one, *The Forest Unseen*, have won numerous awards including the John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Natural History writing.



The Ceiba Tree is an anchor tree in the Ecuadorian rain forest. It is massive in height and breadth. It is vital in the life of various animals and insects in the forest. Similar to the California redwood, it supports a second independent group of flora and fauna in its upper crown which never visit the ground. The specific Ceiba in this book is in the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve of the Amazon Forest. You see the enormous influence and effect this tree has on the jungle and all its other inhabitants and its importance. But there is much jungle and many such trees in Equator that are not in a forest reserve. All around it, closer and closer, the civilized world is intruding. There is oil in Equator, lots of oil, and life there is changing because of it. The sky, which used to be dark, is now full of light at night. The conundrum is that development, particularly drilling for oil, can bring a better life to many of

Equator's inhabitants but it is destroying the life of the forest.

Haskell uses a similar investigation of specific trees as the apex species to demonstrate the interdependence of life of all kinds. Over a period of many years, he visits not only the Ceiba but also a Balsam fir in Ontario, a Sebal Palm in South Carolina, a Callery Pear on a Manhattan Street and several others. These are all different trees in very different environments, but they all occupy an important niche in the world around them.

This beautifully written book should be a must read for all of us concerned with the ethics of human behavior and how humans need to relearn how to coexist with the rest of the inhabitants of the world around us. 🌸

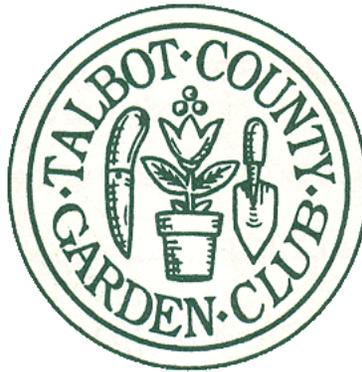


Ceiba Tree in an Ecuadorian Rain Forest. Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

We hope you have enjoyed this Tree Issue of *Can You Dig It?* and that you will join your fellow TCGC members on Tuesday, April 26, at 9:00, as we celebrate Frederick Law Olmstead's 200th Birthday...

"America's first Landscape Architect who believed that parks and landscapes were and are an essential part of a democratic society."

Remember "If Flowers bring us joy, Trees bring us strength."



TALBOT COUNTY GARDEN CLUB

P.O. Box 1524, Easton, MD 21601

Member of

Garden Club of America

National Garden Clubs, Inc., Central Atlantic Region

The Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, District I