

# SWEET AUBURN

*Newsletter of the Friends of Mount Auburn* | SUMMER 2006



HORTICULTURE: KEEPING MOUNT AUBURN BEAUTIFUL

# SWEET AUBURN

A publication of the  
Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery

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**Cover:** Peony tree blossom (*Paeonia suffruticosa*)  
Photo by Dennis Collins

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The Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery was established in 1986 to assist in the conservation of the Cemetery's natural beauty and to promote the appreciation of its cultural, historic and natural resources. Organized in 1990 as a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable trust, the Friends seeks financial support from its members, other individuals, foundations, corporations and public agencies. It receives gifts for educational and interpretive programs and materials for the public, specific cultural projects, and operating support for horticultural rejuvenation and the preservation of the historic monuments, structures, and archival artifacts and records. The Friends has over 1,200 active members.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This issue of **Sweet Auburn** focuses on horticulture, one of the most renowned aspects of the Cemetery. There are articles on new projects and our horticultural staff and volunteers, and on how we balance horticultural innovation with historical integrity and work to be more environmentally sensitive.

Horticulture has occupied a central place in the life of this institution since the very beginning. **175 years ago** on June 23, 1831, the Massachusetts legislature passed an act authorizing the fledgling Massachusetts Horticultural Society "to dedicate...any part of the real estate now owned, or hereafter to be purchased... for a rural cemetery...for the erection of...monuments...and to plant and embellish the same with shrubbery, flowers, trees..." Blanche Linden's seminal book, **Silent City on a Hill – Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery** (1989), which is being redesigned and republished as one of our **175th Anniversary** legacy projects, gives us the details. Beginning in 1825 a group of horticulturists, including Jacob Bigelow and Henry A. S. Dearborn, conceived and brought into being the remarkable project that became Mount Auburn—the first, large-scale designed landscape open to the public in North America. The rural cemetery concept, combining art and nature in a serene place of beauty, was a departure from existing Boston burying grounds. The founders of Mount Auburn looked to Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris and the landscaped estates of 18th-century England as models.

During the summer of 1831 a committee of distinguished citizens, including Edward Everett, Joseph Story and Daniel Webster, promoted the concept of the new cemetery, soon named Mount Auburn, and on September 24, 1831, the consecration ceremony was held. The land was transferred to the Horticultural Society in January 1832 and the first burial took place on July 6, 1832.

**In celebration of our 175th Anniversary** we are holding commemorative events at the **State House on June 22, 2006**, and at the Cemetery on **September 24, 2006**, and all Friends members and donors are invited to attend.

While the Cemetery and Horticultural Society became separate organizations in 1835, the importance of horticulture to Mount Auburn has never waned, and today we are renowned throughout the nation for the quality and diversity of our plantings. I urge you to visit often this summer and in every season to experience the horticultural beauty of Mount Auburn.

*Bill Clendaniel*

William C. Clendaniel, President



Bill Clendaniel

PHOTO BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON



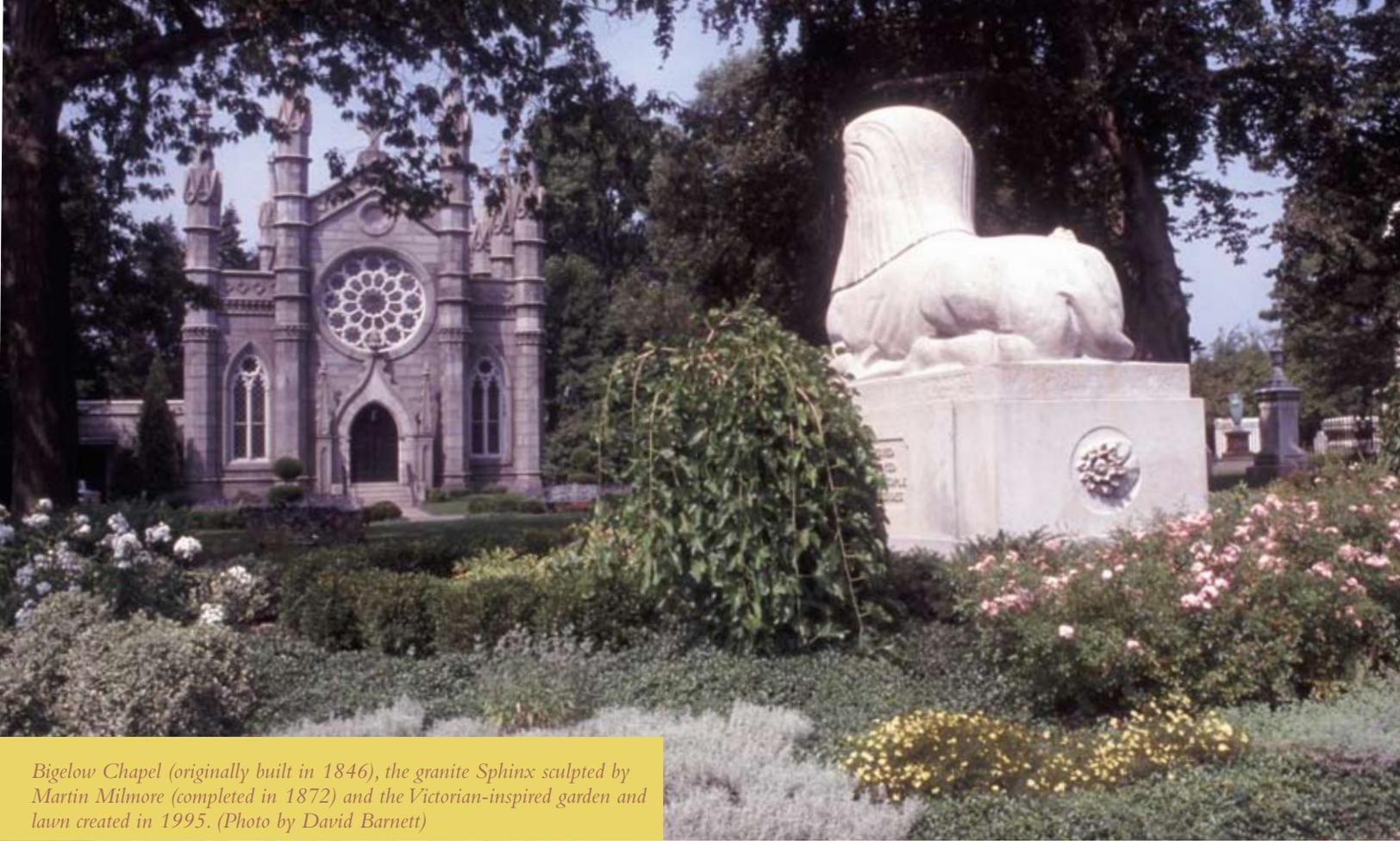
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Bigelow Chapel (originally built in 1846), the granite Sphinx sculpted by Martin Milmore (completed in 1872) and the Victorian-inspired garden and lawn created in 1995. (Photo by David Barnett)

## Balancing Historical Integrity and Horticultural Innovation: THE DYNAMIC MOUNT AUBURN MIX

BY DENNIS COLLINS, *Curator of Plant Collections*

“We absolutely feel this is a dynamic landscape. The Cemetery grew and changed from the day it started. The people who worked here, and the people who came here as customers, brought their contemporary values with them.” Those words by Mount Auburn President Bill Clendaniel in the June 2004 issue of *Landscape Architecture* sum up the Cemetery’s nearly continuous record of blending innovation with historic preservation.

In the 1830s, the founders of Mount Auburn envisioned a place that would be shaped by horticultural excellence, but they were careful to lay out roads and paths in a way that preserved and emphasized the natural beauty already found on the site. Each generation that has followed seems to have attempted to find a balance between preservation and innovation, although at times one or the other has been dominant. The present generation, mindful of its stewardship responsibilities, is embracing both innovation and preservation on a scale perhaps never before seen at Mount Auburn.

The first major initiative was the commissioning of a comprehensive master plan in 1990 to guide the Cemetery as it developed new burial space landscapes and rejuvenated older ones. Finished in 1993 and awarded an American Society of Landscape Architects Design Honor Award, the master plan analyzed each section of the grounds and assigned them to one of eight distinct Landscape Character Zones that reflected an area’s particular style of garden design. The zones are: Rural Landscape, Naturalistic Parkland, Meadow, Country Burial Grounds, Ornamental Parkland, Lawn Cemetery, Victorian and Special Garden Areas. These designations help guide the balance between preserving the old and adding the new. Future planting decisions will continue to be governed by these designations, and efforts will be made over time to further enhance the distinctions that give each area its character.

One example of innovation can be seen in the plantings in front of Bigelow Chapel, done in 1995. Here Director of Horticulture Claude Benoit cleverly used modern-day cultivars derived from Victorian-era plants that “read” as period-authentic yet are resistant to insects and drought, thus reducing the maintenance demands on the horticultural-

ture staff. (A cultivar is a horticultural selection of a plant showing different characteristics from the species, such as a change in a plant's size, flowers, color, shape or vigor. Cultivars are usually propagated to preserve their unique genetic differences.) The gardening crew maintains some of these plants with "topiary" pruning, creating playful, geometric shapes that were popular during the Victorian period.

Previous administrations were probably less concerned with looking backwards and preserving the work of earlier generations. They were, of course, very interested in preserving plants in the landscape, and the impressive number of trees and masses of shrubs we have today that are more than 100 years old attest to that. A few dozen oak trees that pre-date the founding of the Cemetery in 1831 also reflect the efforts to pass along heirloom plants to later generations. But, over the decades, most horticultural staff members were interested in innovation. During the 1860s the invention of the lawn mower led to a widespread conversion to turf throughout the grounds. Rhododendron breeding produced hardy "ironclad hybrids," and the chance hybridization of yews at the Hunnewell estate in Wellesley led to widespread planting of yews in the Cemetery. Yet each time a new popular movement arose, there was some effort to preserve a little of the past.

Today our horticulture department continues this tradition of innovation, and, ironically, it has also helped our preservation efforts. New "bio-logs" made of a natural coconut-fiber material helped stabilize soils against erosion along the edge of Halcyon Lake as part of the renovation of the area surrounding the Mary Baker Eddy memorial—work that restored the memorial's original landscape design. These bio-logs are now being tested in the restoration of the paths in Consecration Dell. Grasses with better drought tolerance have been developed and our staff is now planting them in the Rural Cemetery and Naturalistic Landscape Character Zones, where they are allowed to grow tall, an appropriate aesthetic treatment for the historical period of that zone, and an ecologically sound practice as well.

In some instances, changes in burial tastes have led to innovation. At Spruce Knoll and Halcyon Garden, people share a central, garden burial space and are memorialized on shared markers near the gravesite. Spruce Knoll, designed by Julie Moir Messervy and based on a concept in

the master plan, is an example of a green, environmentally friendly burial space that caters to clients wishing cremation burial with the cremated remains being placed directly into the earth, without containers. Plantings of rhododendrons, azaleas and native perennials were added to an existing grove of conifers. Halcyon Garden features lawn crypts bracketed by wooded edges that include white, Himalayan and Japanese whitespire birches as well as shrubs and a variety of groundcovers. Designed by Reed Hilderbrand Associates of Watertown, MA, Halcyon Garden won an American Society of Landscape Architects Design Merit Award. Both Spruce Knoll and Halcyon Garden are innovative, dynamic elements that complement the existing landscape while adding additional space for burials.

Another recent innovation is the mulching of leaves in-place as an alternative to picking them all up. This practice would seem to be more of a return to traditional methods than an innovative leap forward, yet it is the development of special mulching blades fitted to our power mowers that makes this possible, and it is likely that picking up the leaves was the only alternative during the early days of the lawn landscape movement. The benefits of mulching are enormous. We can expect to see not only the elimination of fertilizer applications, but

improved drought resistance for plants as well. The addition of organic matter to the soil helps water retention and also encourages roots to grow deeper where water-loss to evaporation is lower.

Thus Mount Auburn remains a dynamic landscape, where our horticultural staff is dedicated to preserving the best of the past while using new knowledge and technology to improve maintenance practices; respond to new burial customs; and prolong the active life of the Cemetery and create new landscapes. ❖



PHOTO BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON

*Spruce Knoll—designed in 1993 by Julie Moir Messervy and Craig Halvorson—provides a shared central garden burial space with memorial markers arranged around its*

## EARTH DAY CLEANUP

Mount Auburn's Director of Public Programs Bree Harvey (far left) joins volunteers Rebecca Ramsey (center) and Robin Ingalls in clean-



PHOTO BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON

ing up the banks of the Charles River in association with the Charles River Watershed Association on Earth Day, April 29, 2006.

## ASA GRAY GARDEN REVITALIZATION

BY BREE DETAMORE HARVEY, *Director of Public Programs*

PLANS ARE UNDERWAY TO REVITALIZE ASA GRAY GARDEN, Mount Auburn's "face to the world," located just inside the main gates of the Cemetery. The garden, the horticultural centerpiece of the Cemetery since 1860, was named in 1942 for Asa Gray (1810–1888), one of the leading botanists of the 19th century. Vice President of Interpretive Programs Janet Heywood—retiring after 25 years of service to Mount Auburn—designated the garden as the beneficiary of the fundraiser held in her honor on April 26.

Asa Gray Garden has undergone many design changes over the years, reflecting differing landscape styles. Using the funds raised in honor of Janet, together with other contributions, we plan to add plants that reflect Gray's discoveries concerning the relationship between Asian and North American plants, and, using discrete signage, to tell this fascinating story to our visitors.

Almost entirely self-trained, Gray published five textbooks that helped popularize botany as a field of study.

In 1842 he accepted the Fisher Professorship of Natural History at Harvard University and proceeded to organize Harvard's botanical collections, establish the university's botany department and found the Gray Herbarium (now the Harvard University Herbaria). He also single-handedly trained many of the leading botanists of the next generation.



PHOTO FROM EDWARD LURIE BIOGRAPHY

*Botanist Asa Gray, shown at age 57*

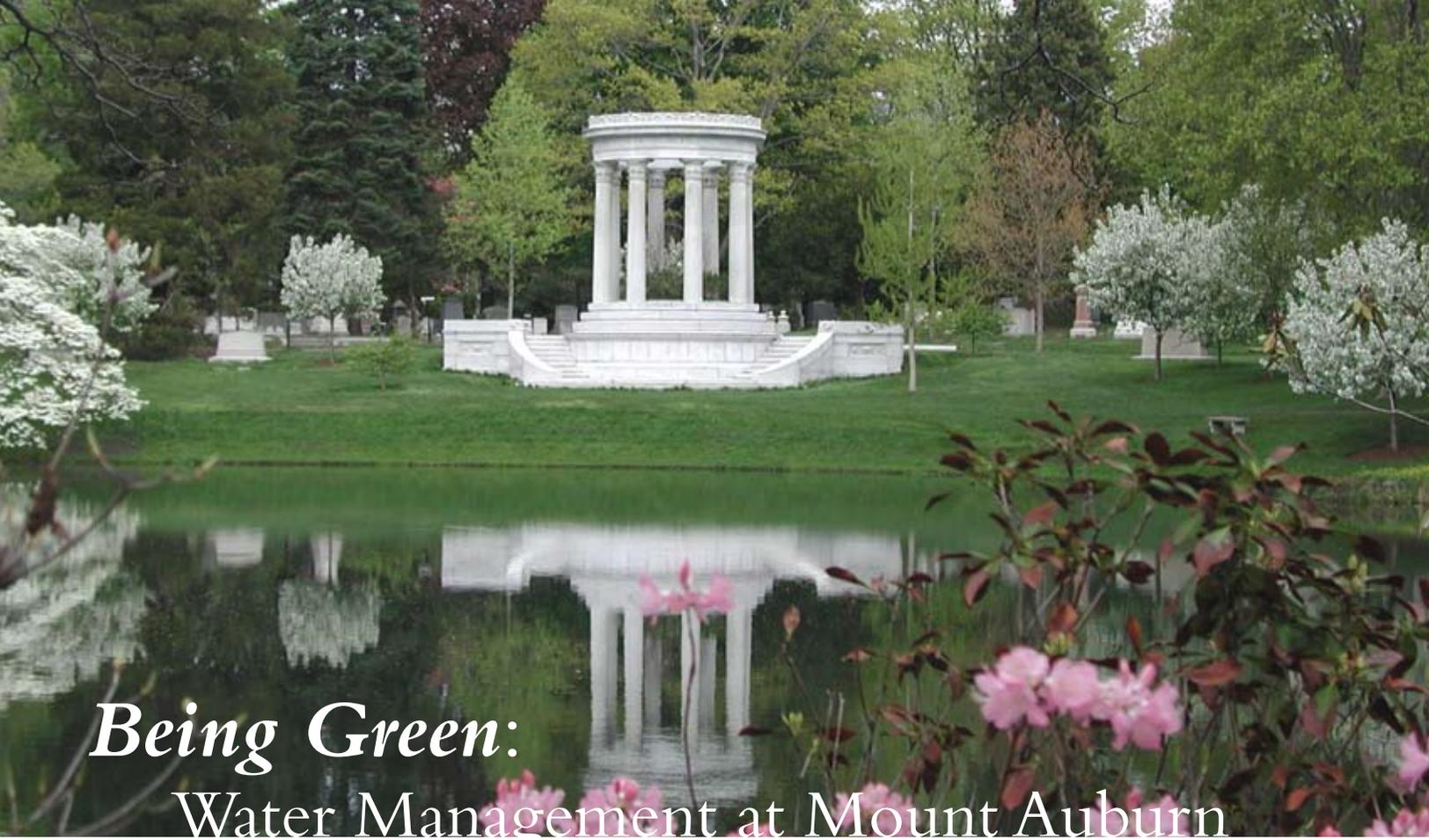
Gray was perhaps Charles Darwin's strongest supporter in the United States, and was honored to be the third person to whom Darwin communicated his theories of evolution. In his own botanical research, Gray worked to support Darwin's theories by trying to make a case for geographic distribution—that, over time, the same species of plants evolved to adapt to differences in their local environments. The similarities Gray saw in plants from North America and eastern Asia led him to propose that these continents had once been

joined together, a theory that predated the acceptance of plate tectonics by almost one hundred years.

Asa Gray is buried in Lot #3949, Holly Path.

*Asa Gray Garden circa 2004  
(Photo by Janet Heywood)*





# Being Green: Water Management at Mount Auburn

BY CANDACE CURRIE, *Mapping & Planning Projects Manager*

Each growing season the Cemetery’s ecologically conscious horticultural staff asks: Will the April showers come? Will there be a deluge in May? Will there be a drought in July, August or September? People in horticulture everywhere struggle with keeping plants healthy regardless of weather conditions. At Mount Auburn, being green could mean...well, turning brown.

For example, about 80 percent of the grounds is solely dependent on rainfall. Irrigation is limited to areas where most burials occur, such as Willow Pond Path, or newly planted gardens or trees. This watering is largely accomplished by lugging around garden hoses with attached sprinklers, but the newest burial areas, such as Halcyon Garden, now utilize a system of pop-up sprinklers that operate on timers and use moisture sensors to ensure that both plants and turf receive sufficient water. Our best “moisture sensor,” however, is Gardening & Arboriculture Supervisor Paul Walker.

Paul and Director of Horticulture Claude Benoit determine when and where water is needed and how to balance those needs with the Cemetery’s water ration. They ask: Is an area active with new burials? Is it a Special Garden Area like Asa Gray Garden? Can a European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), suffering from disease, go

without water for another day? Can the newly planted American beech (*Fagus grandiflora*) at Consecration Dell make it until next week before receiving water?

Water use at Mount Auburn is regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The amount of water flowing over the Waltham dam in the Charles River dictates how much water the Cemetery may legally pump from its 53-foot well that taps the aquifer that stretches from north of Fresh Pond, beneath the Charles River and beyond to Brighton. So it is critical for the health of Mount Auburn’s renowned horticultural collections that we use water as efficiently as possible.

We have improved our water conservation efforts in many ways. In 2003, the Cemetery began collecting rainwater to irrigate flower beds, replaced inefficient sprinklers, and now uses more “soaker” hoses, drip irrigation and timers for early-morning irrigation to minimize evaporation. Replacing turf with mulch under the majestic and drought-intolerant European beech trees helps to retain moisture, requiring less watering.

But last summer drought restrictions kicked in as the water level of the Charles dropped, and Mount Auburn was forced to cut back on its watering. Paul Walker and Claude Benoit made the crucial decisions as to



*Opposite page: The Mary Baker Eddy memorial (completed in 1917) at Halcyon Lake.*

*Clockwise from top: Gardener Marcelino Perez and Gardening Specialist Johnny Colon working on the Hovey lot on Fir Avenue. (Photo by Jennifer Johnston)*

*This pool, known as the Alice Fountain and completed in 1959, was made possible by a donation from Boston philanthropist Mary Tileson Hemenway (1820-1894). Located at the intersection of Mound and Spruce avenues, it honors the memory of Hemenway's daughter, Alice, who died at age 4. (Photo by Bree Harvey)*

*Weed-whacking on Mound Avenue near Thistle Path. (Photo by Jennifer Johnston)*



which plants needed the now scarce resource the most, thankful that our efforts of the last few years had reduced our water requirements. Turf in many areas was allowed to brown out, which fortunately is a temporary phenomenon as the perennial grasses just go dormant. Clearly the future will bring new challenges as we expand our horticultural collections while climate change may be reducing our water supply. Whatever occurs, the Cemetery is firmly committed to responsible green practices and we can hope that the creativity of our staff will allow Mount Auburn's plantings to change and adapt to new circumstances. ❖





*The Butterfly Garden at Willow Pond*

# *Beauty* IN THE *Eyes* OF *All Beholders:* SPECIAL GARDENS AT MOUNT AUBURN

THROUGHOUT MOUNT AUBURN'S 175 ACRES, A VARIETY of spaces and flora keep the landscape dynamic and contribute to the horticultural richness that is the heart of the Cemetery's character. These spaces include special gardens—such as the Butterfly Garden and the Experimental Garden, maintained by the horticultural staff and described in this issue of *Sweet Auburn*—as well as the many gardens on corporation land, such as the one that surrounds the Sphinx at Bigelow Chapel. Many of the corporation gardens were created in conjunction with new interment space, such as the gardens at Willow Pond Knoll. And then there are the tens of thousands of individual lots maintained by the Cemetery in collaboration with the families and friends of our residents.

The Experimental Garden, new this year, may produce repercussions that “grow” far beyond its borders adjacent to the greenhouses. Though the work of testing new plants there will not be seen by most people coming to Mount

Auburn, the Butterfly Garden, next to Willow Pond—began during the spring of 2005—is already delighting visitors, winged as well as biped.

Of course, most of the Cemetery consists of family lots and individual graves. When someone purchases interment space, the care of grass or other groundcover on that space is included in the price. People who wish to provide for the care of plantings on those lots that allow them may choose either annual or continual care. Continual care may be perpetual or for a term of years. People are also welcome to decorate graves with their own natural material such as potted plants or cut flowers.

Taken together, all these spaces help create the unique horticultural landscape that is Mount Auburn, the nation's first landscaped cemetery that made an emphasis on horticulture a requirement for all subsequent cemeteries.

## “EXCURSIONS INTO THE WORLD OF BUTTERFLIES”

When I first mentioned to a company of friends my intention to write an essay on the subject (the psychological peculiarities of butterflies), a scornful laugh greeted me, as if I were testing their credulity... Yet no one, I fancy, could be a close observer of butterflies without noting it.

Instances of the inquisitive ways of these butterflies are numerous. The entomologist cannot fail to be aware of them. Seeing one alight upon the tip of a bough near by he strikes at it with his net, only to see it fly off in an apparent paroxysm of terror, while if he but stop a moment he will see the runaway return, dash about him, and alight again upon the self same spot in a defiant way, flicking its wings up and down, as who should say, “Try it again, will you?”

—SAMUEL HUBBARD SCUDDER, in *Frail Children of the Air: Excursions into the World of Butterflies*, published in 1895

Samuel Hubbard Scudder (1837–1911) was a leading entomologist and paleontologist during the 19th century. A prolific writer, he authored 791 titles on a variety of subjects, including trace fossils, insect behavior, geography and geology. He was a president of the Boston Society of Natural History, co-founder of the Cambridge Entomological Club and the first editor of *Science* (1883–1885). Today, Scudder is mostly remembered for his studies of butterflies. He is buried at Mount Auburn in Lot #4260 on Myrtle Path.



## BUTTERFLY GARDEN PLANT LIST

Adding the following plants and flowers will attract butterflies and bees to your garden at home, just as they do here at Mount Auburn in our gardens.

<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> ‘Compact Form’	summersweet cultivar
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> ‘Sixteen Candles’	summersweet cultivar
<i>Aster macrophyllus</i>	large leaf aster
<i>Helianthus strumosus</i>	pale-leaf woodland sunflower
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i> ‘Sioux Blue’	blue Indian grass
<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>	bugbane
<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>	tufted hairgrass
<i>Solidago caesia</i>	bluestem goldenrod
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	wild geranium
<i>Viola</i> ‘Fuji Dawn’	Manchurian violet cultivar
<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	columbine
<i>Penstemon hirsutus</i> ‘Pygmaeus’	dwarf hairy penstemon
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> ‘Gateway’	Joe Pye weed cultivar
<i>Rudbeckia subtomentosa</i>	sweet coneflower
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	swamp milkweed
<i>Vernonia noveboracensis</i>	New York ironweed
<i>Buddleia</i> ‘Nanho Purple’	butterfly bush cultivar
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> ‘Magnus’	purple coneflower cultivar
<i>Echinacea</i> ‘Art’s Pride’	Orange Meadowbrite™ coneflower
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	switchgrass
<i>Liatris punctata</i>	dotted blazing star
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i> ‘Purple Dome’	New England aster cultivar
<i>Antennaria parlinii</i> var. <i>fallax</i>	Parlin’s pussytoes
<i>Baptisia australis</i>	blue wild indigo
<i>Baptisia lactea</i>	white false indigo
<i>Ruta graveolens</i>	rue
<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> ‘Zagreb’	thread-leaf coreopsis cultivar
<i>Coreopsis</i> ‘Crème Brulee’	thread-leaf coreopsis cultivar
<i>Sedum</i> ‘Brilliant’	sedum cultivar
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> var. <i>clay</i>	butterfly-weed variety
<i>Monarda</i> ‘Jacob Cline’	bee balm cultivar
<i>Monarda</i> ‘Marshall’s Delight’	bee balm cultivar
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i> ‘Butterfly Blue’	pincushion flower cultivar
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	stiff goldenrod
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> ‘Northland’	highbush blueberry cultivar
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> ‘Patriot’	highbush blueberry cultivar
<i>Waldsteinia ternata</i>	barren strawberry

## GOING EXPERIMENTAL AT THE GREENHOUSE: HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

BY SUSAN E. DOOLITTLE,  
*Development Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator*

HOW DO YOU TEST NEW PLANTS, FRESH IDEAS ABOUT sustainability and environmentally gentle methods of pest control without showing off the results before you're ready to go public? You take a clue from that old children's classic,



PHOTO BY SUSAN DOOLITTLE

*Greenhouse Technician Paul Kwiatkowski, right, with gardener Gerardo Santiago in the arbor of the new (2006) Experimental Garden, designed and managed by Paul and located near the Cemetery greenhouses.*

*The Secret Garden*, and do your work behind the scenes. That's what Greenhouse Technician Paul Kwiatkowski is up to in Mount Auburn's new Experimental Garden at the greenhouse. Paul has worked with Gardeners Gerardo Santiago and Mary Scalis and Greenhouse Manager Maurene Simonelli, as well as staff from outside the Horticulture Department and volunteers.

The garden is marked by rustic arbors built of pruned tree branches. Here Paul has planted 15 varieties of heather

(*Calluna vulgaris*) during the last week of April and two varieties of hops (*Humulus lupulus*) during the first week of May. Toward the end of May, two volunteers, Jeanne McCarthy of Belmont, MA, and Fred Jones of Watertown, MA, began planting a number of perennials, including two varieties of *Arabis caucasica*, two varieties of *Dianthus barbatus*, St. John's wort (*Hypericum olympicum*), catmint (*Nepeta clarkii*), stonecrop (*Sedum telephium*) and Irish moss (*Sagina subulata*).

The garden will help the horticultural staff compare the growth habits, care needs and pest resistance of these plants and then propagate the best ones and introduce them around the Cemetery to increase plant diversity and trim maintenance requirements.

Paul is also concocting his own homemade compost from Cemetery byproducts—leaves, grass clippings, spent flowers and small branches. Even coffee grounds—collected at Mount Auburn's offices and the Uncommon Grounds, a cafe in Watertown—are added to the mix. This compost is then combined with soil, resulting in a mixture rich in nutrients, thus decreasing the need for other plant "food" and cutting water use by trapping moisture. Rainwater from the greenhouse roofs is also collected for the Experimental Garden and other parts of Mount Auburn in rain barrels donated by Home Depot in Watertown.

Increasing the Cemetery's use of sustainable practices is a Cemetery-wide goal, and the Experimental Garden is one more way in which we are learning to care for our environment more responsibly.

## THIS SPRING'S BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

BY DAWNIELLE PECK, *Visitor Services Specialist*

AS USUAL, BIRDING AT MOUNT AUBURN THIS SPRING was a rewarding experience. **Blue-headed vireos** and **pine warblers** appeared on April 24. Later, **sparrows**, **orioles** and **flycatchers** arrived. Our old friends such as the **black-and-white warbler**, **wood thrush**, **chipping sparrow** and **gray catbird** were spotted throughout May. Two **Baltimore oriole** nests have been observed in a dawn redwood and sweet gum near Willow Pond.

A real treat came on May 2 when a male **hooded warbler** was noted for the first time this season. Another rarity, a **yellow-bellied flycatcher**, was spotted near Washington Tower on May 9. Other surprises included two sightings of a **wild turkey**, observed first near the Operations Center, then a few days later near Washington Tower. A **mute swan** was spotted flying overhead on April 27. This graceful bird was last sighted the previous spring.

Other relative rarities making an appearance this spring were: a **yellow-throated vireo**, **Cape May warbler**, **red-bellied woodpecker** and **green-winged teal**. Despite torrential rains on Mother's Day weekend, we had sightings of the **black-crowned night heron**, **great blue heron**,

**magnolia warbler**, **yellow-rumped warbler**, and **warbling vireo**.

Other uncommon birds that have been spotted this spring include: **great crested flycatcher**, **least flycatcher**, **yellow-billed cuckoo**, **orchard oriole**, **indigo bunting**, **northern parula warbler** (noted quite often), **prairie warbler**, **Canada warbler**, **hermit thrush**, **Cooper's hawk**, **merlin**, **fox sparrow**, **white-crowned sparrow**, **Lincoln sparrow**, **rough-winged swallow**, **red-breasted nuthatch**, and an **American woodcock**.

Resident birds—like the pair of **red-tailed hawks** seen collecting branches to build a nest—have also been observed. Although April and May are the busiest months for migrating birds, summer also brings birds and birders together at Mount Auburn. Indeed the Cemetery earns its designation by the Massachusetts Audubon Society as an **Important Bird Area** in all seasons of the year. ❖



*A great blue heron at Willow Pond, July 2005*

PHOTO BY JOHN HARRISON

Approximately 70 years old, this Nikko pine (*Abies homolepis*) is located on Spruce Avenue, near Elder Path. (Photo ©Richard Cheek)



## SPREADING MAJESTY: TREES AT MOUNT AUBURN

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882), who is buried in Lot #580 on Indian Ridge Path, described a “spreading chestnut tree” in his poem “The Village Blacksmith.” During his lifetime he visited Mount Auburn on several occasions and would have enjoyed many of the trees that we still see here today, some of which predate the Cemetery’s founding.

Mount Auburn contains a magnificent collection of more than 5,000 trees from some 600 species, gathered over time from throughout the world. Many of these include once-rare trees that were the first specimens brought to America during what is known as the “golden age of plant collecting” in the mid- to late- 19th century.



This purple (European) beech (*Fagus sylvatica* ‘*Atropunicea*’) is across from Story Chapel. It is a venerable tree, planted during the 1870s.

Located near Magnolia Avenue and the Washington Tower, this white oak (*Quercus alba*) is a native species and was probably here before Mount Auburn was established 175 years ago. (Photos by Jennifer Johnston)



## SPECIAL MEMORIALS: BENCHES, TREES AND PLAQUES

BY JIM HOLMAN, *Director of Cemetery Services Administration*

WHAT IS EXTRA SPECIAL ABOUT A DOZEN OF MOUNT Auburn’s most beautiful trees? They double as living memorials. Families and friends make a tax-deductible contribution toward the care of a tree in their loved one’s memory and a plaque inscribed with the name and dates of the deceased is then fixed to the tree as recognition for the gift. Our first memorial tree was endowed in March 1994.



We have identified a number of trees throughout the Cemetery as potential memorials. People may choose a tree from this list or another tree that is equally suitable. Memorial trees run the full spectrum from ornamental to canopy

specimens, with a wide range of heights, forms, colors and leaf textures. About half the people choosing a memorial tree choose a flowering specimen and half a canopy tree. No particular species is a “favorite.” Some people have found having a memorial plaque on a tree substitutes for an upright marker in sections where only flat markers are allowed.

People take particular pride and interest in how a memorial tree is doing. Usually plaques are put on mature trees, but I remember a wife and son who made a gift of a young tulip tree near Halcyon Lake during the planting done there in 2001. Although a tulip tree is very large when it matures, this tree was still a youngster. Today the tree has grown a good 20 feet. Members of the family often stop by to talk about how “their” tree is doing and how far it’s come in just five years.

While other cemeteries offer memorial trees, I believe the way we incorporate the name of the decedent with the common and scientific name of the tree on the plaque is unique. And most cemeteries cannot compete with the beauty and variety of Mount Auburn’s tree collection. Having one of our trees as a memorial is indeed a unique option.

Another memorial option is having a plaque commemorating a loved one placed on a bench in return for a contribution for the upkeep of the grounds. Like the tree program, the memorial bench program came into being in 1994, when Mount Auburn chose standard bench designs in both wood and granite. Potential memorial benches are located throughout the Cemetery.

Depending on the size of the contribution, tree or bench plaques have a life of 10, 20 or more years. At the end of the period, the memorial may be renewed by another gift. In this way the Cemetery receives ongoing support and the trees and benches may become available for other memorials.

## STAINED GLASS RESTORATION UNDERWAY

BY MEG WINSLOW, *Curator of Historical Collections*

OLD, RARE AND BEAUTIFUL, the north chancel window in Bigelow Chapel is now undergoing extensive restoration



*Peter Clearwater (left front), Cynthia Welton (right front) and Tim O'Neil (above right) of Serpentino Stained & Leaded Glass, Needham, MA, removing the window panels from Bigelow Chapel on March 21, 2006.*

to ensure that this masterpiece will be here for future generations to admire. Since changes in temperature cause stained glass to expand and contract, over time, the chancel window's panels began bulging and bowing dramatically, with missing support bars and damage from past efforts at restoration and waterproofing. To restore its stability and beauty, the window was removed from its original location over the altar to the studio of Serpentino Stained & Leaded Glass, Inc. in Needham, MA, in March. Installed in 1846, the window measures 21-1/2 feet high by 9 feet wide and is composed of 36 panels containing over 4,200 individual pieces of blown glass. It

is considered one of the important early works produced by Ballantine & Allan, the Scottish firm based in Edinburgh that also created the now lost windows for the Houses of

Parliament in London. It is one of the few examples of that firm's early work that survive today.

For the center rose panel of the chancel window, Mount Auburn's founder and second President Dr. Jacob Bigelow commissioned a representation of the period's well-known bas-relief *Night* by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (c. 1770-1844). This image depicts an angel cradling two children in her arms. (A picture of the window was shown on the cover of the summer 2005 issue of *Sweet Auburn*.) The Mount Auburn image is painted on glass and will be examined by stained-glass consultant Julie L. Sloan and tested for stability.

In the studio conservators are carefully making rubbings of each of the window's panels. They will document and photograph each panel, test for the stability of the paint on the glass and then begin the process of restoration. Bigelow Chapel is not complete without the art, light and pattern of this window, and we eagerly anticipate its return in late fall 2006. ♦



*Director of Preservation & Facilities Maintenance Gus Fraser examining the glass in Serpentino studio after its removal from Bigelow Chapel.*

PHOTOS BY MEG WINSLOW

## NEW STAFF JOIN MOUNT AUBURN

BY AMANDA YOST, *Director of the Annual Fund & Membership*

**Mount Auburn Cemetery welcomes two new members of its staff, Steve Anable and Dawnielle Peck.**

In the newly created position of Communications Coordinator & Writer Steve writes and edits a variety of materials, including *Sweet Auburn* and the annual report. He will also assist in writing web content and materials for our 175th Anniversary events. Steve's background includes writing experiences at a wide range of companies and institutions, most recently at Brandeis University. He is a longtime history buff and holds degrees from Stanford University and the Graduate School of Education at Harvard.

Dawnielle is our new Visitor Services Specialist. From her office at the entrance gate, she greets and assists visitors, and will soon lead public tours of the Cemetery. Dawnielle is

a graduate of Smith College and previously worked as an assistant at the Haley & Steele gallery in Boston. Mount Auburn was one of the first historic sites she visited after moving to Boston from California, and she is now the first face many of our visitors see when they arrive at the Cemetery.

SEASONAL STAFF: You may also notice many additional faces on the grounds during the summer. This year, 35 new and returning seasonal staff were hired to help with upkeep during the warm months.



*Steve Anable and Dawnielle Peck*

PHOTO BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON

## DENNIS COLLINS: DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

BY STEPHEN ANABLE, *Communications Coordinator & Writer*

“NOT EVEN VAGUELY,” CURATOR OF PLANT COLLECTIONS Dennis Collins says when asked if he comes from a family of people with green thumbs, “although I did watch my grandfather plant an oak tree forty-plus years ago that is still growing.” His journey from his botanical beginnings, grudgingly mowing the small patch of his native Med-

ford that constituted the family yard, to his present position is as twisting as some of the roads here at Mount Auburn—leading through several careers and universities on two continents.

Dennis came to Mount Auburn in 1990, having left the landscaping business to take a “temporary” job here as an arborist, becoming, in effect, one of the Cemetery’s tree doctors. He monitored the health of the trees, diagnosing whether cer-

tain ones were ailing due to insects, disease or problems in the environment, and then treated them. He also climbed trees to prune them or install cables to bolster sagging branches. He had been attracted to Mount Auburn because it had “a very impressive collection of trees, equal to or better than many botanical gardens.”

Vice President of Operations and Horticulture David Barnett created the position of Curator of Plant Collections for Dennis in 1995 “to upgrade the Cemetery’s management to make it more in line with the way modern botanic gardens operate.” Dennis’ initial—and formidable—assignment was to take a horticultural census or inventory, identifying every plant that was unknown at the time, “which was mostly everything that wasn’t a tree.” This massive project, which Dennis calls “the most rewarding thing about this job,” has taken seven years and is almost complete.



PHOTO BY SUSAN DOOLITTLE

Curator of Plant Collections  
Dennis Collins

Dennis believes this inventory can pay off for even the most casual visitor strolling through the landscape. Display labels—currently installed only on trees and featuring the tree’s common name, botanical name and country of origin—show the global nature of what’s growing at Mount Auburn. “By knowing a tree’s country of origin, some people may be able to observe that this plant from Asia is very similar to that plant from North America, following in the footsteps of botanist Asa Gray.” (See page 3 for Asa Gray’s biography.) Dennis has also delved into the Cemetery’s records to determine when many particular trees were planted, and that information is now featured on their display labels.

Dennis’ interest in horticulture began when he was a teenager, working as a gardener at the Winchester Country Club. He enrolled at Dartmouth College, where majoring in history was not quite compelling enough to cause him to earn a degree, but the beauty of the nearby wilds stoked his interest in horticulture. During his time in the ‘80s as a landscape construction foreman and as the owner/manager of his own company, he was steadily acquiring educational credentials that put down roots in the world of horticulture. He eventually earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in urban forestry and landscape management. Later, Mount Auburn gave him a year off and financial support to obtain a master’s degree in botany from the University of Edinburgh in the “the only graduate degree program in the States or Europe specifically focused on taxonomy, the science of classifying and naming plants.” Dennis is now chair of the Plant Nomenclature Committee of the American Public Gardens Association, the professional association of those who manage botanical gardens and horticultural sites such as Mount Auburn.

Dennis says he has moved too many times to have “a significant garden at home.” He now lives with his wife Natasha and their two daughters—Sarah, 13, and Sophia, 8—in Harvard, MA. Having nearly finished “a gigantic wrap-around porch” (one of his hobbies used to be making furniture), Dennis is finally ready to plan a garden on his home turf, so to speak. “I’m planning on using mostly native plants, and leaving very little grass to mow,” he says. Have his daughters inherited their father’s green thumb? “Not yet, but there’s still time.” ♦

## BILL “ON THE ROAD AGAIN”



Left: President Bill Clendaniel and members of the Chilton Club pause at the Sphinx during a tour of Mount Auburn on a very damp May 10, 2006. Center: President Bill Clendaniel with other guests at a Mount Auburn dinner reception on February 9, 2006, at the Boston home of Friends members Robert and Elizabeth Owens. This house on Beacon Hill’s Mount Vernon Street was once the home of Mount Auburn founder Dr. Jacob Bigelow and his wife. Right: President Bill Clendaniel is taking the Mount Auburn story to many groups in and around Boston. Here, he speaks to the Boston Athenaeum on April 11, 2006. (Photos by Meg Winslow and Jennifer Johnston.)

## A FAREWELL TO JANET HEYWOOD

Friends from near and far bade farewell to Vice President of Interpretive Programs Janet Heywood at a party at the Commander's Mansion at the Watertown Arsenal in Watertown, MA, on April 26, 2006. At Janet's request the evening was a fundraiser to benefit the rejuvenation of the Cemetery's Asa Gray Garden. A funny and affectionate slide presentation of Janet's life, work and family was produced, shown and narrated by Michael Schaffer of Cambridge.



Top to bottom: Bob Stymeist and Janet admire a watercolor of Consecration Dell, a gift to Janet from the artist, Clare Walker Leslie. Friends of Mount Auburn Trustee Gordon Abbott, Jr., of Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA; Honorary Trustee Hamilton (Ham) Coolidge of Westwood, MA; and Trustee Ann Roosevelt of Cambridge. Left to right: Susan Olsen, Executive Director of the Friends of Woodlawn Cemetery in New York City; Sheila Reilly, Education Director of the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, and the American Cultural Society; and Laurel Gabel Trustee Emeritus of the Association for Gravestone Studies, and the cemeteries and gravestones section of the American Cultural Society. President Bill Clendaniel with Susan Jackson of Brookline, MA, who wrote and read a whimsical and heartfelt poem in honor of Janet. Susan is also a charter member of the Friends of Mount Auburn, and, like Janet, a longtime birder. (Photos by Meg Winslow and Michael Schaffer.)



## HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE: SETTING PRIORITIES

BY DAVID BARNETT, *Vice President of Operations & Horticulture*

RESPONDING TO A GROWING NEED TO FOCUS ON horticultural issues at Mount Auburn, the Trustees, following the recommendation of the Buildings & Grounds Committee, established the Horticulture Committee in 2004. The committee is charged with developing improved long-term methods for preserving and managing the overall landscape and plant collections of the Cemetery—key tasks in the continuing process of keeping Mount Auburn beautiful. The committee is currently chaired by Trustee Tom Cooper of Watertown, and includes Trustee Louise Weed of Cambridge and horticultural staff members Paul Walker, Claude Benoit, and Dennis Collins, as well as Vice President of Operations & Horticulture David Barnett and President Bill Clendaniel.

The committee completed a plant collections policy that was adopted by the Trustees in May 2006 and is now turning its attention to conducting a comprehensive evaluation of our horticultural collections, including making specific recommendations for plant lists for each of the Landscape Character Zones outlined in the 1993 master plan. The committee will also give recommendations for plantings for proposed large-scale landscape projects.

Susan Dumaine, then of Weston, MA, joined the Horticulture Committee in April 2005, bringing her talents as a consultant and designer of naturalistic-form landscapes. She helped the staff design a wildflower meadow at Washington Tower for which we are seeking funding and helped with the design of additional garden areas that will improve the Cemetery as a habitat for birds and other wildlife. Unfortunately for us Susan moved to Kentucky last November, but she has generously offered to continue giving Mount Auburn some of her time and expertise. The committee is now seeking additional members to help guide our horticultural future. ❖

# Volunteer Profile:

## CURTIS ADAMS AND ELIZABETH WYLDE — BRANCHING OUT

BY STEPHEN ANABLE, *Communications Coordinator & Writer*

TWO VOLUNTEERS IN PLANT COLLECTIONS AT MOUNT Auburn are conducting their own kind of horticultural experiment. Curtis Adams, of Watertown, who has volunteered here for one year, is determining if the botanical world might hold his second career. Elizabeth Wylde, of Cambridge, who has given the Cemetery five years of diligent work, has used her time here to broaden her knowledge of nature, which helps her with other community service, such as monitoring rare and endangered species for the New England Wild Flower Society and doing all the publicity, membership outreach and organizational duties for Friends of Fresh Pond Reservation.

Both of these volunteers are labeling trees at Mount Auburn or updating the Cemetery's horticultural database. Both, coincidentally, are planning gardens at home featuring species native to New England. Curtis envisions a garden with some chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) and other woodland plants, such as squirrel corn (*Dicentra canadensis*) and wild bleeding heart (*Dicentra exima*). Says Curtis, "Woodland plants come up in the spring before the trees leaf out, when there is enough light on the ground and a fair amount of moisture. They give you this rush of plants from mid-April to mid-June."

Elizabeth, too, is favoring woodland plants for her yard near Porter Square, putting in a shad bush (*Amelanchier canadensis*) and a sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboretum*)—"a smallish understory tree that has flowers that hang in an arching manner; I think this is just lovely." Native plants, she notes, don't need as much maintenance, and the resulting habitat supports native birds, insects and other plants.

Both Curtis and Elizabeth have had careers and educations rich with scientific accomplishments. Curtis was a research and development chemist with the Cabot Corporation in Billerica, MA, having earned a B.S. in chemistry at Cal

State University Fullerton and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry at MIT. Elizabeth, who earned a B.S. in biology at Rutgers and an M.A. in secondary education from Tufts, retired after teaching ninth- and tenth-grade biology in Wayland, MA, and designing and building exhibits to demonstrate various aspects of the human body at the Boston Museum of Science.

Curtis has been taking design classes at the Landscape Institute of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum and is now enrolled in courses in drafting and landscape history. He knew it was time for a career change when he became as intrigued by the landscaping outside various buildings as by what was happening inside in the laboratories. He says, "I've been a while deciding what I'm really passionate about. I was doing woodworking, which was interesting, but I don't think I could do it professionally." Then he met Mount Auburn's Director of Horticulture Claude Benoit at an Environmental Landscaping Association conference, visited the Cemetery and decided to volunteer.

"I hadn't been to Mount Auburn before I signed up to begin volunteering, but I knew it was a wonderful place," Elizabeth says. "When I got here, I saw what a great spot it is." Perhaps Elizabeth is speaking for many volunteers at Mount Auburn when she says, "I think that a connection with the earth is critical for our well-being." ❖



Elizabeth Wylde, of Cambridge and Volunteer  
Curtis Adams of Watertown, MA

PHOTOS BY SUSAN DOOLITTLE



Curator of Plant Collections Dennis Collins and candidates at the Volunteer Fair. (Photo by Jennifer Johnston)

## VOLUNTEER FAIR DRAWS ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

Twenty-three volunteer candidates and eight staff members attended the Mount Auburn Volunteer Fair, held on April 20 and 22, 2006 in Story Chapel. Also on hand to share their experiences were five current volunteers at the Cemetery: Frances Pratt and Sandy Gamble from Historic Collections; Deicy Stockwell from Public Programs; Elizabeth Wylde from Plant Collections; and Irene Dygas from Development/Membership. Candidates explored options in the greenhouses and the Experimental Garden, Plant Collections, Historic Collections, Public Programs and Development/Membership. New this year as volunteer opportunities are the Experimental Garden, and the Docent Program being developed in Public Programs.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON

# Celebrating 175 years!

## “Facets of Mount Auburn Cemetery: Celebrating 175 Years of a Boston Jewel”

Free lecture series at the Boston Public Library:

- October 18, 2006, W.E.B. DuBois AND THE *ENCYCLOPEDIA AFRICANA*: HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., W.E.B. DuBois Professor of Humanities at Harvard. *Co-sponsored by the New England Historic Genealogical Society.*
- November 14, 2006, THE ASIAN CONNECTION: DANIEL J. HINKLEY, celebrated West Coast horticulturist, plant explorer and author. *Co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society; New England Wild Flower Society; and the Wellesley College Botanic Garden.*
- January 24, 2007, BOSTON'S 19TH-CENTURY MUSIC LIFE: STEVEN LEDBETTER, musicologist and former program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. *Co-sponsored by the New England Conservatory.*
- February 7, 2007, NO MARGIN, NO MISSION: MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY AS A CHARITABLE ENTERPRISE: PETER DOBKIN HALL, Hauser Lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. *Co-sponsored by The Boston Foundation.*
- March 1, 2007, 19TH-CENTURY ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN BOSTON: DAVID DEARINGER, Hilles Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Boston Athenaeum, on the significance of Bostonians as patrons of the arts during the 19th century. *Co-sponsored by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.*
- April 24, 2007, THE PLEASURE, ART AND SCIENCE OF BIRDING: WAYNE R. PETERSON, Director of Important Bird Area Program at the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and SCOTT WEIDENSAUL, natural history writer. *Co-sponsored by the Harvard Museum of Natural History and the Massachusetts Audubon Society.*
- May 15, 2007, CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN AMERICA: DR. CHARLES BEVERIDGE, Editor of the *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, and ARLEYN LEEVEE, national expert on cultural landscapes their preservation. *Co-sponsored by the National Association for Olmsted Parks, Olmsted National Historic Site and the Friends of “Fairsted.”*

Mount Auburn Cemetery will mark the 175th Anniversary of its beginning with a year-long celebration starting in June 2006 and featuring public programs that highlight Mount Auburn's extraordinary cultural, historic and natural resources.

### Highlights of the 175th Anniversary:

- ★ **Ceremony at the State House**, June 22, 2006 honoring the signing of the legislation authorizing the creation of Mount Auburn in 1831
- ★ **Ceremony at the Cemetery**, September 24, 2006, commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the actual date of the Consecration of Mount Auburn
- ★ **Free Public Lecture Series: “Facets of Mount Auburn Cemetery: Celebrating 175 Years of a Boston Jewel,”** October 2006–May 2007, Boston Public Library, Copley Square
- ★ **Art and Music Programs**, at Mount Auburn and offsite
- ★ **Gala Dinner**, June 14, 2007, at Mount Auburn, closing the anniversary year,

All lectures will be held at 6:00 PM in the Rabb Auditorium of the Boston Public Library. A reception will follow each lecture. The lecture series is sponsored in part by the Anthony and Mildred Ruggiero Memorial Trust.

**Our lecture series partners are: The Boston Athenaeum; The Boston Public Library; Historic New England; The Massachusetts Historical Society; and The National Park Service.**

## Art and Music Programs

Highlighting artists and composers buried at Mount Auburn or works featuring Mount Auburn.

### February 1 – March 8, 2007:

The Vose Galleries of Boston will host an exhibition of paintings by artists buried at Mount Auburn.

### Fall 2006 and Spring 2007:

Onsite concerts will be held at Mount Auburn Cemetery. Dates and performers will be announced.

### September 2007:

“Remembering E. Power Biggs,” two organ recitals, at 2:00 and 5:00 PM, with guest speakers, at Adolphus Busch Hall, Harvard University. *Co-sponsored by the Harvard University Art Museums.*

For further information, please call 617-607-1995.

**Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery**  
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Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-5517

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