

Articles by Linnea West



Pictured (l to r): Deb Foehring, Linnea West, Jan Castillo, Sean Pflaumer, Laurie Williams, and Polly Baxter

Photo by Mary Johnson

Memphis Botanic Garden Tree Team

As members of Laurie Williams's volunteer Tree Team at the Garden, we have the great green fortune to walk these 96 beautiful acres monitoring tree health. We document the growing arboretum collection, prune alongside staff, engrave and mount botanical signs, maintain the Conifer Reference Garden that the team established in 2014, and educate visitors through Urban Forestry classes, garden tours, and *Under the Oaks* newsletter. In our role as a Center of Excellence Arboretum, we advise, and help ready, for certification new arboreta in the Memphis area. In 2016, the Tree Team recorded GPS tracking points for 200 tree species for a new MBG digital map in progress. Visitors to the Garden will be able to pinpoint individual trees and pull up growth characteristics and cultural needs for each one. You can find the Tree Team out in the Garden in all weather with clipboards, pruning tools, and tree labels. Please come say hello – There is nothing we like talking about more than trees!



Calling All Coneheads....

What is the tallest living thing in the world? - a conifer: Coast Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, towering nearly 400 feet.

What is the largest living thing? - a conifer: Giant Sequoia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, over 52,000 cubic feet.

What is the world's oldest living thing? - a conifer! Bristlecone Pine, *Pinus longaeva*, nearly 5,000 years old.



Have you ever stared into the eye of a Dragon?

West of Lake Biwa, just below the Japanese Pavillion, is the lair of *Pinus densiflora* 'Oculus-draconis', Dragon's Eye Pine. The large green and yellow eyes stare back bewitchingly as one gazes down into the branch ends...

This unique pine is native to Japan, Korea and parts of China. A slow grower, Dragon's Eye

Conifers have grown on earth for 225 million years with over 600 known species today. Most conifers have needle or scale-like leaves, usually evergreen. Rather than flowers, their reproductive parts are male pollen cones and female seed cones. Conifers may be ground covers, shrubs, or trees, and can be found growing in extreme conditions all over the earth from the subarctic to the subtropics.

The Conifer Collection of the Memphis Botanic Garden, spread throughout the grounds, includes over 100 unique species. Many can be found in the NW corner of the Garden (outside and inside the children's garden fence).

A silver mailbox a stone's throw north of the Rose Garden holds conifer maps of the entire grounds. Explore the Japanese and Asian gardens, the Woodland, and the Old Arboretum.... Enjoy the treasure hunt!

Coming this summer, we will be breaking ground (south of the silver mailbox) for a new garden of dwarf conifers under the benevolent watch of their tall, stately relatives: Arborvitae, Pines, Spruce, Cedars, and Cypress.

can eventually reach 30 feet tall with a spread nearly as wide. It likes full sun, well-drained and slightly acid soil.

Each needle has two yellow bands, giving the clustered foliage an appearance of green and yellow ringed eyes. The bark is made of orangey-red scales becoming grayer and fissured as the dragon ages. Trunks are often crooked lending these trees to bonsai.

Would you like your own garden to be a Tree Sanctuary?

The Tennessee Urban Forestry Council has a new program for homeowners.

Follow the link below to find out criteria for certification and the many benefits:

[Make your home a tree sanctuary](#)



Photos by Jan Castillo.

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