

# Under the Oaks

Newsletter of the Arboretum at Memphis Botanic Garden

Volume 2

**Memphis Botanic Garden will celebrate Tennessee Arbor Day with a tree planting by Memphis City School students and BRIDGES Ordinary 2 Extraordinary.**



**March 6, 2009**

**10:00 a.m.**

The City of Memphis, Division of Parks, in conjunction with Memphis Botanic Garden, Memphis City Schools, and BRIDGES Ordinary 2 Extraordinary, will hold a tree planting event in observance of the official City of Memphis Arbor Day. The ceremony will take place on Friday, March 6 at 10:00 a.m., at the site of My Big Backyard children's garden, a new project at Memphis Botanic Garden, scheduled to open late summer, 2009.

Arbor Day is an annual observance dedicated to the planting and conservation of trees. National Arbor Day is observed on the last Friday in April. However, because the ideal time to plant trees varies with the climate, Tennessee celebrates Arbor Day on the first Friday of March.

BRIDGES launched their Ordinary 2 Extraordinary (O2E) Pilot Program, under the direction of Mollie Merry Campbell, in January 2009, with the participation of Sherwood, Vance, Bellevue, Chickasaw, and Humes Middle Schools. O2E provides experiential education and training for a diverse group of youth and adults to become leaders for environmental sustainability. Through O2E, in-class curriculum is complemented with an experiential field trip to the BRIDGES Center for a first-hand investigation of green building design, sustainability principles and green leadership.

**The Memphis Botanic Garden is certified by the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council as a Level 4 arboretum.**



The original arboretum area of the garden was planted over 50 years ago, but by 2005, fewer than 25 species, mostly undocumented and unlabeled, were in this area. At that time, with the approval of executive director, Jim Duncan, a group of dedicated volunteers and staff members set out to have the garden certified as a Level 4 arboretum. Standards for level 4 include having at least 120 tree species labeled, providing a site map and producing a quarterly newsletter.

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Leadership for this project was provided by staff member Laurie William, who supervised the volunteer "Tree Team". Over the course of the next two years, they found over 135 different species of trees growing in the garden's 96 acres. Each tree in the arboretum was labeled and historic information was documented for each tree.

Master Gardener, Jim Volgas, provided valuable knowledge and support to our team of volunteers headed by Nancy Bauman, Dana Daniels, Ann Frogge, Jan Castillo, Polly Baxter and Jean Norris. Dr. Bob Jones of Rhodes College lended essential expertise in mapping and database creation. Staff members, Rick Pudwell and Kyle McLane, were invaluable resources for the identification of many trees.

The certification of our arboretum would not have been possible without the assistance of those listed above, as well as many others whose names have not been mentioned. This arboretum is an example of what can be accomplished when people work together toward a common goal. Our heartfelt thanks is extended to all those who helped carry out this monumental task.

## **Did you know?**

85% of a tree's roots are in the top 12 inches of the soil's surface. The roots extend well beyond the crown of the tree, often 2-3 times as far.

## **Trees are "Green"**

Trees improve the environment in several ways. Trees absorb and store carbon, a compound shown to influence global warming. Air quality is improved because trees also absorb many pollutants such as nitrous oxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide. Trees improve water quality in a community by decreasing soil erosion and reducing storm water runoff. Energy costs for residents can be decreased when homes are shaded by trees or when trees are used as a windbreak.

## **University of Tennessee Master Urban Foresters**

A volunteer group has been organized and trained through the University of Tennessee Extension Service to educate residents of Shelby County about trees and tree care. The U.T Master Urban Forester volunteers have completed at least 20 hours of classroom training in tree biology, soils, wildlife and construction issues related to trees. Volunteers also learned how to select the best tree for a site and proper planting methods for trees. Master Urban Foresters are committed to providing citizens accurate and up to date information about trees in our community. These volunteers are available to work with school classes, garden clubs and other interested groups. For more information on working with our volunteers, please send e-mail request to [karencfl@bellsouth.net](mailto:karencfl@bellsouth.net).

## **Mulching**

Applying a 2-4- inch layer of organic mulch around a tree's base enhances a tree's appearance and has several other benefits. Mulch moderates soil temperature, maintains moisture and conditions the soil as it breaks down. Proper mulching allows water to infiltrate into the soil and reduces competition from

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grasses and weeds. On the other hand, improper mulching may damage a tree and lead to its demise. If mulch is too thick, the tree's roots may grow up into the mulch rather than outward. This causes the tree to be more susceptible to drought and temperature fluctuations. Piling mulch around the base of a tree, volcano style, creates a moist environment which makes the tree more prone to diseases and also attracts rodents and other pests. To enhance air circulation, always pull the mulch a few inches away from the trunk to expose the flair at the tree's base.

## Which tree am I?

1. Because of its shape, my seed is sometimes called a bat.
2. Unlike most deciduous trees, my leaves don't "fall" in the fall.
3. You may think my flowers are white, but a closer look shows they are actually small and yellow with large, white bracts.
4. I'm the Tennessee state tree.

a. Dogwood b. Maple c. Yellow Poplar d. Southern Magnolia

## Tree Trivia

In Tennessee, about 200 different varieties or species of trees can be found growing wild.

The oak tree, *Quercus*, has the ability to adapt genetically to a wide variety of different climates. Over 600 different species of oak exist worldwide in a variety of soil, moisture and altitude conditions.

The fruit of trees is known as mast. Mast can be considered "hard" like acorns, pecans or walnuts; or "soft" such as the fruit of dogwood or wild cherry. Mast is important for the survival of many different wildlife species.

The largest oak tree in the United States, as determined by the American Forests' national Register of Big Tree point system, is a Cherrybark, *Quercus pagoda*, located in a private yard in our neighboring Tipton County. It is also the largest broadleaf tree in the United States.



## A Tree to Know

Weeping Blue Atlas Cedar

*Cedrus atlantica* "Glauca Pendula"

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Pronounced: se' drus at-lan-ti-ka

Family: Pinaceae Zones 6 - 9

Origin: Algeria, Morocco, Atlas Mountains

Culture: Sun to partial shade. Well drained, loamy soil, but tolerates sandy or clay soil, acid or alkaline conditions.

40 - 60 feet average height 30 - 40 foot spread

This tree may be as wide (or wider) than tall.

According to Rick Pudwell, Director of Horticulture at Memphis Botanic Garden, this tree is the best true cedar to grow in our area. It is the most cold hardy of the three true cedar species.

Although some may consider it "plant abuse", the branches can be staked to manipulate the design. The Blue Atlas Cedar creates an impressive reflection when planted next to lakes, ponds and pools.

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## **Which tree am I? (answers)**

1. b/2. d/3. a/4. c

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