

EDITH J. CARRIER ARBORETUM™

AT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY



Photo by Frank Doherty

Summer Newsletter

JUNE 2011

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From The Director

We have had a productive spring with many events, all of them held in pure ephemeral beauty, and now summer is upon us. This spring, two nesting pairs of wood ducks took refuge in our back pond. Although they are shy, we hope the Arboretum can provide what they need to feel safe and well fed. Look for the photo of them on our website or on our new blog at <http://ejcarboretum.wordpress.com/>. We invite you to share your Arboretum photos with us here or on our Facebook page.

Our stage garden was completed this spring, and we look forward to putting it to good use with our Solstice Under the Stars Dinner & Dance on June 18th. The stage garden was the first phase of our Campaign for Arboretum Accessibility, and the next phase will be the Ernst Tree Terrace, a hilltop patio and pergola adjacent to the Frances Plecker Education Center. The Ernst Tree Terrace will increase the workspace of the Frances Plecker Education Center, allowing educational and social activities to flow from the indoors to the outdoors. In addition, the Ernst Tree Terrace will allow horticulture therapy programming and activities at the wheelchair accessible raised beds and work table. Construction will begin in September.

Please visit our website Contact Us page and e-mail Gail Turnbull to be placed on our email list to receive updates on construction, workshops, and events. In addition, please stop by the Arboretum often to see the new features and experience the beauty of nature!

Sincerely,
Jan Sievers Mahon

“This piece of land, this arboretum, is dedicated to stabilizing and balancing the lives of those who visit it. This space is also dedicated to the needs of ordinary people who seek renewal... who simply need an infusion of nature to better handle their days.”

**—Dr. Ronald Carrier,
JMU President Emeritus**



Photo of Jan Sievers Mahon, the director
of the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum



CATCHING UP WITH THE

Education Committee

The EJC Arboretum Education Committee members include Cathy Copeland (chair), Ginny Chandler, Betty Chappell, Carol Flora, Sherry Leffell, Tom Lord, and Joe Sharrer.



A guided tour of the EJC Arboretum



Children's workshop at the Frances Plecker Education Center



Members of the Education Committee

- * The Education Committee has streamlined and promoted educational program and tour offerings to Harrisonburg City, regional communities, and surrounding public and private schools. As a result, the Arboretum is receiving record numbers of tour requests, and is pleased that increasing numbers of schoolchildren, homeschoolers, and other visitors are learning about the mysteries and intricacies of botanical sciences within the Arboretum borders via these educational programs and tours.
- * Two Education Committee members, Joe Sharrer and Tom Lord, are taking time out of their schedules to track wildflowers. They are noting which wildflowers bloom when and where in the Arboretum. This record will help the Arboretum staff replant some populations of flowers and will serve as an excellent resource of typical blooming time for a variety of flowers.
- * The committee has been working on creating downloadable MP3 self-guided audio tours for the Arboretum. A variety of trees will have a small marker displaying a number; visitors to the Arboretum can access information about that tree species by going online to the Arboretum's web site and matching the number on the tree to the number of the audio tour. Although there is still much to do before the finished audio self-guided MP3 tours will be available for visitors, this new feature will be a new, useful, and exciting way to explore the Arboretum. Look for the tags and audio tour sometime during the summer!
- * In the near future, the Education Committee intends to create more educational signage, highlighting interesting plants, animals, ecosystems, and unique features at the Arboretum. The new signage will be large, weather-proofed, and will contain both text and images. These signs will help visitors learn more about plants and wildlife.
- * Additional volunteer docent tour guides are always needed to help with Arboretum Educational Programs. If you are interested in being trained to lead tours at the Arboretum, please contact Cathy Copeland at copelaca@jmu.edu.



JAN SIEVERS MAHON

Gardens Afloat Create Pristine Ponds

One of the biggest challenges since our pond was installed at the Arboretum has been managing our muddy water. This year, we plan on trying a new technique, **floating wetlands**, which is quickly gaining notice for amazing results in the clarifying and purifying of pond water. Not only are floating wetlands a helpful tool for increasing water clarity, but they offer beauty and aesthetic interest, provide shelter and food for wildlife and insects, and reduce algal growth on pond surfaces.

We plan to use an assortment of water-loving plants, both native perennials and annual tropicals. The plants will be potted into a special soil and the roots will grow down directly into the water through coir (cocoanut husk fiber) on floats made of recycled plastic and closed cell foam, providing the same benefits as water plants in a natural wetland would. Wetlands plants process excess nutrients, take up pollutants, trap sediment, and reduce suspended solids in water.

Plants such as *Hibiscus moscheutos* (swamp hibiscus), blue flag iris, sweet potato vine, and wax begonias can be used along with giant taro, papyrus, *Oenanthe japonica* (water celery), and many others. The native plant floats can be left to overwinter on moving water, and they will reemerge in the spring. Currently, plants used in floating wetlands are being studied for nutrient removal in fish farms and pig farms. In both cases, floating wetlands have improved the environment and offered a cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution.

Floating gardens come in all sizes for use in very small home ponds to large farm ponds. There are available designs that work for backyards, neighborhood retention ponds, and many other scenarios. For more ideas, go to www.unitygardens.org.

With cleaner water here at the Arboretum, we hope to attract more birds and insects, reduce labor demands for algae skimming, and provide a more beautiful and appealing place for you and other visitors to enjoy.



Heavily polluted pond



Floating wetlands



UNDERSTORIES

Arboretum Weddings

Did you know that more weddings are held annually at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum than at any other garden wedding site in the Harrisonburg area? Catherine Ventura and Neema Akbarzadeh were one of the couples married at the EJC Arboretum last year. EJC Arboretum Board Member Ann Menefee had an opportunity to speak with Catherine recently about her EJC Arboretum garden wedding experience.



Ann: *What were your main considerations in choosing a wedding venue?*

Catherine: We wanted an outdoor wedding that had an organic feel and emphasized the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley, where we grew up.

A: *What factors swayed your decision to select the EJC Arboretum site?*

C: When we visited the garden we

found that even though it's so close to a university we found it to be very peaceful and private. The grounds were very well taken care of and we knew a lot of love went into keeping them this way. We loved the willow tree around the pond and the nature trails that surrounded the venue.

A: *What advantages did the EJC Arboretum offer, compared to other sites?*

C: Neema and I found that most places didn't have a place on site to get ready so close to the ceremony. The Arboretum provided two separate buildings for both parties to get dressed and ready in.

A: *How did the EJC Arboretum support staff assist you in your planning? Were your specific requirements and expectations met?*

C: We were provided with shuttle options for parking. The staff set up and broke down all the wedding



*Catherine Ventura and Neema Akbarzadeh were one of the couples married at the EJC Arboretum last year
Photos by CatThrasher Photography*



UNDERSTORIES CONTINUED

chairs and tents that we rented. A small reservation sign was put up, giving us a private and personal feel. Everything went very smoothly and the staff was a pleasure to work with.

A: What can you say about the natural beauty of the EJC Arboretum as a unique venue for a garden wedding?

C: The nature trails around the venue were filled with amazing greenery, providing some stunning photo ops for our photographer. We wanted a feel of the valley and that was achieved beyond expectations.

A: What features did you take advantage of for your professional wedding photographs?

C: The pond surrounded by large sycamores and the willow tree was a great backdrop for most of our photos.

A: What features of the EJC Arboretum helped to make your big day more special/unique?

C: Unlike most outdoor venues we found the Arboretum to be very private. We were worried there would be too many on-lookers but we found that the staff made sure we had a reserved private area for the wedding.

A: What is a favorite memory from your wedding?

C: During one of our photo shoots in front of the pond, a family of ducks waddled by.

A: Any words of advice for couples looking for a garden wedding site?

C: The only advice I can give is to know what you want and really explore your options. Virginia has so many beautiful gardens but we found that the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum had every-

thing we wanted. If you're looking for lots of foliage and serene privacy then the Arboretum is a place you will want to explore as an option.

A: What suggestions can you share with other brides planning their weddings at the EJC Arboretum?

C: We had our wedding late morning which worked out perfectly for lighting and privacy. I don't suggest wearing heels; they don't fare well in soft ground.



Photos by
CatThrasher
Photography



2011 Calendar

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information or to make reservations for events, go to the [EJC Arboretum website](http://www.jmu.edu/arboretum) (www.jmu.edu/arboretum) or contact us at 540-568-3194. Note that within selected calendar items there is a link to more information and to the registration page for the event. Also, a complete listing of all events scheduled for the next 12 months can be found at the website's [Calendar of Events](#).

* **Monthly Art Exhibits:** *FPEC during weekday business hours. May-June, the exhibit of Ed Gowen paintings continues through June 30th, held over by popular demand. July and August, exhibit of paintings by Barbara Wachter. September, paintings of Matalie Deane exhibited. FREE.

* **June 18: [Solstice under the Stars](#)**, 6:30-10:00 p.m. Reserve either a romantic picnic dinner for two (\$50 per couple) or a plated dinner (\$35 per person) on a linen covered table. Each guest

dinner includes two glasses of wine or alternative nonalcoholic beverage. Remember to bring a blanket or lawn chairs! Make it a wild and wonderful Solstice celebration with dancing to live music on the Arboretum lawn under the stars. This event is held annually the Saturday closest to each year's longest day. [Advance reservations](#) required by June 13.

* **June 14 through Sept. 13, [Storytime in the Understory](#):** second Tuesdays, 11:00 a.m. to approximately 12:00 noon. Children will develop an understanding of the importance of nature from children's literature selections. Bring a picnic blanket or lawn chairs, and a picnic lunch for after Storytime. Sunny days held on the lawn; inclement weather held indoors at *FPEC. FREE

* **June 22, 23, & 24: [Summer Children's Nature Art Camp](#).** Register for a morning (10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon) or afternoon (1:00-3:00 p.m.) session. Children will learn summer trees and flowers of the Arboretum. The workshop offers education on plant identification and basic botanical drawing, materials

included in a \$35 fee. [Advance reservations](#) required by June 20.

* **June 22 through July 27: [Summer Brown Bag Lunch Lecture Series](#)**, Wednesdays at noon. The Pavilion. No advance registration needed; enjoy lunch and a great topical lecture. FREE



Photos by Frank Doherty



CONTINUED EVENTS

Brown Bag Lectures:

— **June 22: Sustainable Home Garden Design.** A landscape design pro will give design secrets for home gardens that will thrive through drought without harsh chemical fertilizers and backbreaking maintenance.

— **June 29: The Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail** with Lou Verner. Learn about local birding hot spots and trails, followed with a walk in the beauty of the Arboretum for a brief guided bird walk for those who can stay past the noon hour. Book signing follows lecture.

— **July 6: Lavender to Lemonade.** Learn about using herbs in the kitchen with Arboretum Director Jan Sievers Mahon. Find out how versatile herbs can be!

— **July 13: Beekeeping Basics,** Michael Hott, Arboretum Grounds Manager. Learn statutes and how-tos for backyard honey, and develop your own new friendship with a garden's best friends... bees!

— **July 20: Virginia Black Bears** with child author Gabriel Maple. Includes a book reading from *Oh No, Gertrude*, the true story of a mama bear and three cubs from Shenandoah National Park.

— **July 27: Heirloom Seed Exchange.** Lisa Bauer, Arboretum Grounds Manager, teaches how to avoid being trapped in the annual cycle of seed purchasing! Trade heirloom seeds at this lecture and learn why heirlooms are the best for your home garden, and a great way to make new friends.

* **July 16: Moonlight Summer Carriage Rides.** 7:00-10:00 p.m. \$10 per adult, \$7 per child, \$58 for private carriage. (Carriages seat 6 adults.) Enjoy being drawn through the woodlands of the Arboretum by beautiful Belgium and Percheron teams of horses and an experienced coachman on a warm summer night in a romantic convertible carriage. Reservations recommended, email turnbugl@jmu.edu or call 540-568-3914.

* **Sept. date TBA** (date, destination and cost will be announced on the Arboretum website in early August): **Fall Remarkable Trees Tour.** Every fall the Arboretum leads a guided tour to a remarkable trees site in the height of autumn color.

* **Sept. 22: Monarch Migration Tagging Workshop,** 10 a.m. - 12:00 noon in the Pavilion, with Linda Marchman, educator and butterfly farm owner. Enjoy a lecture and various workshop activities along with tagging and releasing Monarch butterflies to start their seasonal migration. (Also available as a class field trip.)

**FPEC is the Frances Plecker Education Center, found on the grounds of the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at 780 University Boulevard, Harrisonburg, VA 22807*

The EJC Arboretum was voted the "**Best Place to Relax**" and "**Best Place to Propose**" in the annual reader survey by the Harrisonburg *Daily News-Record*.

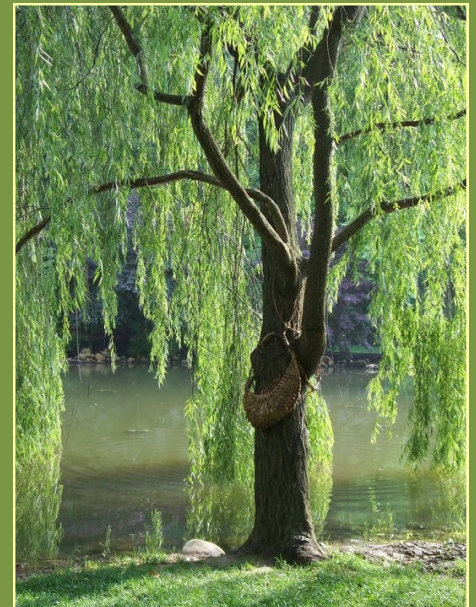


Photo by Angela Linebaugh

