

C H A U T A U Q U A



BIRD
TREE
&
GARDEN
CLUB



Spring In Chautauqua County

By Suzanne Aldrich

Spring is a time of new beginnings and endless of possibilities.

Here, in Chautauqua County, we wait for it to make a committed appearance. Our patience is often tested. This has been one of those years.

May arrived with sunshine and blue skies which quickly disappeared. It did, however, put our magnolia tree on the alert. Soon there were buds which quickly flowered. So often this tree is in full bloom when a freeze and snow returns. That was the case this year, but we had a surprise. Our proud magnolia stood firm and held on to her flowers. Perhaps it gained determination over the years. Blossoms did not fall as they endured the cold and snow. It held its own and remained in bloom for several weeks with off and on climate attacks. In time, a pink petal carpet covered the ground.

Hummingbirds arrive by May 1st regardless of rain, snow and wind. Several years back we did not have our feeder out and we watched a hummer's arrival, tapping on the front window, fluttering in place, expecting its usual red feeder. Obviously, it was returning to a familiar source of food. How do they do that? Since then, the date is noted on our calendar and we are prepared.

Orioles come shortly there after. They are fewer in number this year. We are accustomed to being a primary food source and able to keep them throughout the summer. They feed from liquid oriole feeders, jelly and oranges and hummingbird feeders. One unique fellow arrived in the front window hanging off the hummingbird feeder and chose to hop off on to the window ledge, pecking his way across the surface staring intensely into the dining room. What did he have in mind?

In spite of snow, frost warnings and freezes, spring persists. With three days of warm weather, our deck was prepared. We have now begun to eat lunches outside watching a wide variety of birds at numerous feeders. A pair of pileated woodpeckers entertained us as they chased one another up and down from tree to tree. They were at a distance and we queried whether they were courting or establishing territory.

Nature recognizes spring before we do. Everything is at the ready waiting to burst forth. Spring has a plan, yet we view it as whimsical and often unpredictable.

This is a season of renewal. Birds sing, flowers bud and multitude shades of green appear. The air is fresh. We are awakened to the wonder of believing in tomorrow. Our spirits are lifted, we come alive, we get up and out.

Spring works wonders as our spirits soar.

- Suzanne Aldrich is a BTG Life Member and Past President of the BTG. Recently retired from the BTG Board, Suzanne is still very active - currently chairing our Book Committee and as of today, a contributing writer to the newsletter. A retired teacher, Suzanne works with the Roads Scholars when she's not BTG-ing, grand-parenting, gardening, or traveling. Suzanne and her husband Ken, also a Life Member, live in Chautauqua County. (Editorial note: I may have messed up some of Suzanne's bio, but she's on long-awaited family trip out west and I didn't want to bother her AGAIN so I figure I'll run a correction next month. I know she was (is?) very involved with the Girl Scouts - maybe Head of Girl Scouts NY? USA? Worldwide? Would not surprise me. She's a Boss! - LR)

- The photo above by Jeanne Wiebenga shows snowdrop anemone and forget-me-nots blooming under the sugar maples last week in the Bride's Garden. The Bride's Garden is the small triangular garden between the Hall of Christ and the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Read more about the [Bride's Garden here](#).





Washed Ashore

Chautauqua Institution is hosting a six-month art exhibit, [Washed Ashore: Art to Save the Sea](#), now through October.

Fourteen sculptures have been installed throughout the grounds, all created from plastic washed up on the world's beaches. Jeanne Wiebenga took this photo in front of the Athenaeum Hotel on May 24.

There will also be educational programs focused on the environmental impacts of plastic and on solutions. Betsy Burgeson, Supervisor of Gardens and Landscapes will lead a guided tour on Mondays at 12:30pm Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9 during the season. There will be other programming around the exhibit so stay tuned.





Working Wednesdays

By Jean Fulkerson

When: Every Wednesday, starting June 28

Where: Butterfly Garden (by the South Gate on Massey Ave)

Time: 8am until you have to be elsewhere (10am at latest)

In summer 2022 BTG volunteers worked with Betsy's garden crew to remove privet from the (former) Secret Silo Garden in the Ravine between Massey Avenue and 394.

By popular demand we are asking you to join us every Wednesday this summer to get your hands dirty and continue efforts to transform the Secret Silo garden into a woodland wonderland.

Join us at 8am Wednesdays in your work clothes and be prepared to use loppers, hand clippers, and even saws to rid the area of invasives. Betsy Burgeson will be there to instruct us in how to identify the plants to remove (ie privet, garlic mustard, buckthorn) and which plants to leave in place.

In return you will make new friends, sweat away those extra ice cream cones, and receive the thanks of Betsy and her team. Our goal is to create a usable and welcoming path in an area that is now mostly tangled brush and vines.

Plan to meet us at the Butterfly Garden (where is that you say?), which is adjacent to the South Gate on Massey Avenue. There will be plenty of signage and a BTG representative to greet you. No need to sign up. Betsy and the BTG will provide tools and equipment, but please bring gloves if you have them,

guests and friends, and a happy attitude!

While you are adding this event to your calendar also help us think of a witty name. We considered Weeding Wackos but someone pointed it out that makes it sound like we are growing pot - which I assure you we are NOT. Suggestions with alliteration or acronyms will be considered by the committee - in other words whoever shows up for the first event on June 28th!

- Jean Fulkerson, BTG Life Member and somehow now Chair of the Volunteer Committee, including all the benefits and responsibilities included therewith

* You do NOT have to be a BTG Life Member to volunteer with the BTG! Seemed obvious, but just in case it needed saying, we've said it. Come one, come all! *



Tree of the Month



Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

by Leslie Renjilian

The charming redbud is not native to Western New York - it is a southern tree, but does quite well here. An **understory tree**, it usually tops out at 20-30 feet, often growing wider than it is tall, and lives happily in the shade of larger trees.

A close look between the beautiful heart-shaped leaves will reveal dangling seed pods that look like flattened snap peas, which lets us know that the redbud is in the **legume family**.

The nature writer Donald Peattie wrote that **George Washington** “confided many times to his diary that he had transplanted redbuds from the woods to his garden.” Now I know that you know that's a No-No. Don't worry - the redbuds in Chautauqua were purchased from nurseries and not stolen from the woods.

The **name redbud is confusing** because what we *notice* is the flower - not the bud - and the color we notice is pink, not red. The leaf buds are in fact a blackish-red and the flower buds are reddish-purple, and I suppose it must have been one of those buds that was notable to whomever got naming rights on this tree.

Redbuds are perhaps most appreciated because they bloom at the first hint of

spring weather, and since the trees are still leafless, the **effect is spectacular and very welcome** in the otherwise still-bleak landscape. A lone redbud in bloom in a garden will grab your attention, but for my money, looking out into a leafless forest sprinkled with redbuds in bloom is the sweetest sign of coming spring.

Bonus for hungry hikers: the **flowers are edible** and quite tasty.

Redbuds also exhibit an unusual botanical trait called *cauliflory*, which means the **flowers can develop on any part of the tree, including the main trunk or large branches**. It's especially eye-catching on the redbud because the **bark tends to be quite dark**, especially on older trees which also tend to exhibit more cauliflorous flowering than younger trees (although cauliflory can occur on very young trees as well). The term comes from the Latin "*caulis*" (stem) and "*flor-*" (flower) and strangely the vegetable cauliflower is not, by this definition, cauliflorous! (Go have fun with that on your own time on the internet - it's a deep rabbit hole of long botanical words in italics.)

After the spring flower display, the little trees all but disappear in summer in the sea of green, but they shine again in the **fall when their leaves turn a clear, bright yellow**. There are many redbuds on the grounds of Chautauqua - another reminder that the summer season is not the only time that Chautauqua is worth visiting.

And while I am usually **a fan of the "straight native"** (meaning a tree that evolved in nature without the cross-breeding help of nurserymen and horticulturalists), there are a few **redbud cultivars that are truly spectacular and seem to do better in Chautauqua than the straight natives**. The most common of those is the **Forest Pansy Redbud**, which has a purplish leaf. That's the cultivar in the photo above of the redbud in front of the Women's Club, taken by Jeanne Wiebenga on May 23.

But the most exciting redbud cultivar in Chautauqua can be found in the Serman Garden near Miller Park. It is a weeping variety called the **Covey Redbud or the Lavender Twist Redbud**, but I have heard some people refer to the little tree as the "Cousin It" tree. The original tree was grown from a seedling planted in about 1965 right nearby in Westfield, New York by Connie Covey. Propagated and patented, the Covey Redbud can now be purchased most anywhere. [Click here to hear Betsy Burgeson](#) getting pretty excited about the Covey Redbud on a garden tour last summer. This tree will never get very tall. Horticulturalist Michael Dirr reports that a 30-year old tree is 5 ft. high with an 8 ft. diameter and a 5 inch trunk.

There are notable redbuds in many gardens in Chautauqua. Look for them this summer.

Leslie Renjilian
BTG Life Member and President
Aspiring Amateur Dendrologist

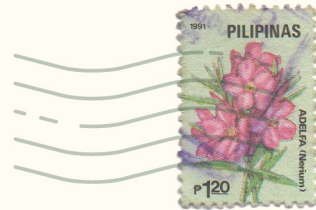
Thanks to Betsy Burgeson for the photos on the bottom right of the redbud in bloom. Note the cauliflory on the large branch and the shape of the flowers -

evolved to be pollinated by long-tongued bees.

...and making some excuses for that food photo below: I am not the kinda gal who normally photographs my food, but when I was served a tart sprinkled with redbud flowers, you'd better believe I pulled out my phone!



Save the Date



JULY 14, 2023 - 11:45 AM ● ATHENAEUM HOTEL PARLOR

Chautauqua Bird, Tree & Garden Club Life Member Luncheon

FEATURING GUEST SPEAKER HOLLY SHIMIZU-
NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HORTICULTURIST, CONSULTANT, AND
EDUCATOR.



Tickets are on sale now for all the [2023 Life Member Events](#), including the [Life Member Luncheon on July 14](#). The Luncheon is \$45 per person.

Remember, all of our [Programs](#) are free and open to all Chautauquans. We do offer a handful of small [Events](#) which are limited to Life Members only. These Events are limited in size and have registration fees and/or associated costs. For more information about the Life Member Only Events, including the Life Member Luncheon, and to buy tickets, click below.

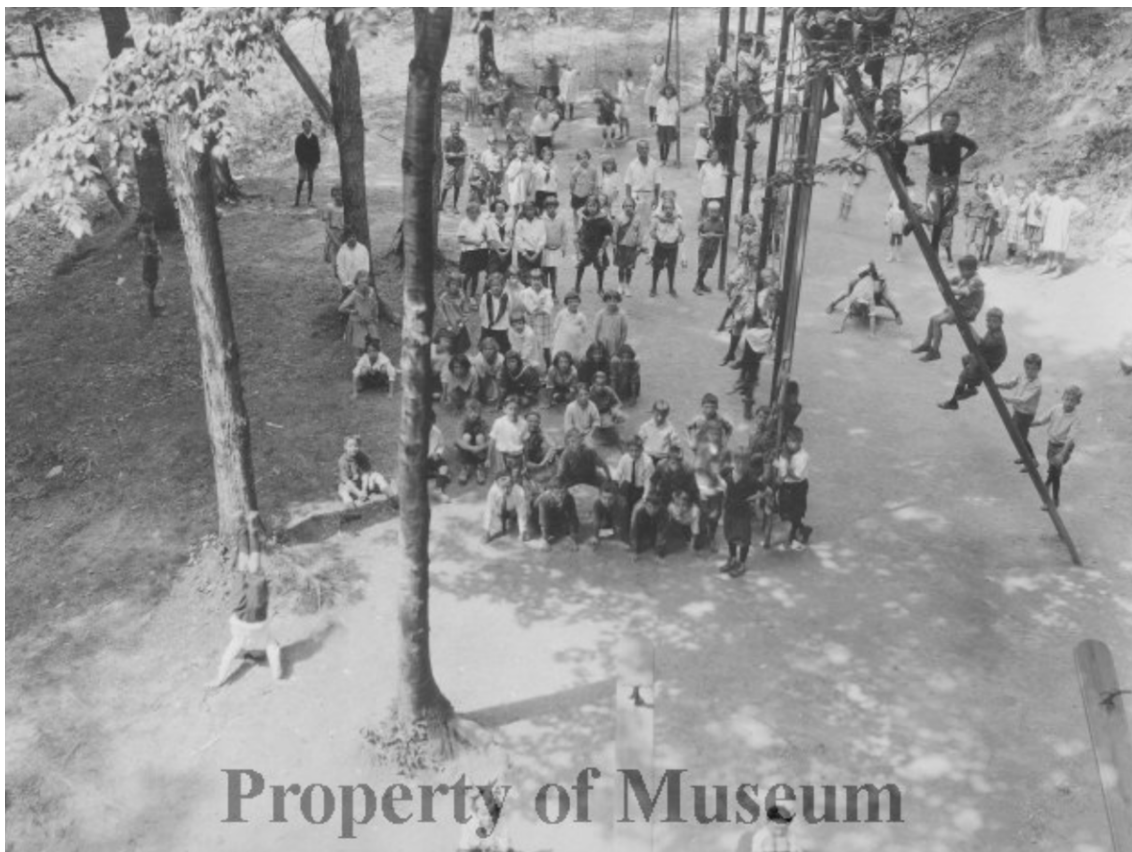
Look for more info on the Life Member Events in newsletters to come.

[Buy Event Tickets](#)

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Historical Tidbit



The Changing Ravine

The photo of the Ravine c. 1920 shows a large group of children sitting, standing and playing in the Children's Playground, a wooden climbing and swinging structure in the Ravine. The notation on the back says "Under the Iron Bridge; South Ravine; near Girl's Club"

The Fire Circle was built in the 1930s with help from Mina Miller Edison and rehabbed in 1999 by the BTG. Many stories have been told around the circle. Today it is used by club counselors as a break area.

The swing set in the photograph was taken down in 1941 and Mary Lee Talbot wrote this of the efforts that followed to turn the ravine into a Western New York Botanical Garden: "Mrs. Frank Grove spent many years trying to maintain a nature trail in the south ravine near the Boys' and Girls' Club.... In 1942, after children had removed all the aluminum labels from plants, Mrs. Grove abandoned hope...." Mrs. Grove wrote: "Nature herself can do a heap of teaching, so for the duration, or until the Ravine can have more protection, the Nature Trail will agree that the poet is right, the sermons will be preached in stones, and the books may be read in running brooks."

In the 1990s BTG President and Madlyn Correll and board member Joan Smith led projects to create the Burgeson and Roger Tory Peterson nature classrooms and put trails through the ravine. Those are still in use today.

Currently former BTG Treasurer Vince Zaleski is

volunteering his time and wood working talents to restore the benches in the Roger Tory Peterson Outdoor Classroom. The Board also voted to replace the signage and markers in the RTP Classroom, so look for new markers soon.

The BTG installed tree markers on 5 trees in the Ravine in 2021 and because they have survived the marauders, we will install more this summer. Unlike the aluminum markers Mrs. Grove installed in the 1940s, the modern markers are nearly impossible to remove. (Oh my gosh! Did I just jinx the whole plan by typing that?!)

And of course - see Working Wednesdays article above - we will be removing invasive plants from the Ravine this summer. Be a part of history and join us! Some day 100 years from now, your photo might end up in the Historical Tidbit section of whatever this newsletter looks like in 2123.

Leslie Renjilian, amateur ravine historian



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