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HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ARBORETUM SOCIETY
EUNICE BEGUN

University of Tennessee Arboretum Society
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

ABSTRACT

The following is a brief history of the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society from its inception through January, 1980, with some mention of the individuals who were instrumental in its development.

THE BEGINNING

The ideas of an arboretum for Oak Ridge existed in the minds of several people long before it became a reality. One such person was Alexander Hollaender of the Biology Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory. As early as 1948 when Hollaender, Charles Congdon, Don Foard, and others hiked in the Cumberlands on Sunday mornings, they discussed the possibility of an arboretum for Oak Ridge where hiking and a scientific study of plants could be combined. The Biology Foundation had some money received from fees for consultation and lecturing and Hollaender hoped to interest the University of Tennessee in supplementing this money and establishing an arboretum. The Biology Division, however, did not involve itself in an arboretum and the Biology Foundation money was not used toward the purchase of land. But an effort had been made and the idea of an arboretum had crystallized.

At about this time, another group working on the same idea was composed of University of Tennessee officials. Subsequently in August, 1961, the specific basis for action occurred when the University acquired 2,264 acres of forested land near Oak Ridge from the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare for use in teaching, research and demonstration. The site on which an arboretum was to become established was accurately described in an early brochure published by UT before the Arboretum was opened to the public. It says, in part ... "Prior to the early 1940's ... the area was heavily farmed. Virginia Pine and Shortleaf Pine now cover most of the old fields, but Yellow Poplar and some Black Walnut are found on sites in these fields where the soil is better. The rest of the Arboretum is largely second-growth Oak and Hickory forest in what was originally Oak and Chestnut forest".



Old Homestead once located in the present
Magnolia breeding orchard area

A COMMITTEE IS FORMED

In April 1962 a committee from the University met for the purpose of establishing an arboretum; at that time a recommendation was made by A. J. Sharp that the committee request a portion of the University of Tennessee Oak Ridge property to be designated for arboretum use. Committee members B. S. Pickett, Royal Shanks, Nathan Hall, Walter Herndon, J. S. Kirby-Smith, Evvind Thor, and Merrill Bird unanimously approved Sharp's recommendation. Accordingly, in December 1962 a proposal for development of an arboretum was forwarded to John Ewing, Dean of the UT Agricultural Experiment Station. The proposal outlined certain objectives ". . . To establish a collection of woody plants adapted to the climate of Tennessee . . . to utilize and expand existing plant groups and preserve such areas as have special values for ecologic study . . . to provide space for a collection of mutants of woody plants . . . Development of the arboretum should be in the hands of one individual directly responsible to the Director of the Experiment Station. A satisfactory office, laboratory and assembly building with the necessary herbarium space and library should be erected . . ."

So, the idea of an arboretum did actually become fact, as noted in *The Oak Ridger* of April 1964, "The UT Forestry Department has started work on an Arboretum, a place where trees and shrubs are grown for scientific and educational purposes." At this time the UT Forestry Department expanded from a two-year to a four-year program and John Barrett became head of Forestry. Robert MacDonald, assistant professor in Forestry, became Arboretum Director. His first office was an abandoned guardhouse near Solway Bridge.

Now that the Arboretum was a reality, the time was right for an arboretum society in the community, a friends-of-the arboretum group similar to the groups supporting other arboreta in this country.

In February 1965 efforts were underway to form an active, non-profit organization for the purpose of furthering the development of an arboretum. At the suggestion of Bob MacDonald, Director, a committee was formed to set up such an organization. A meeting for this purpose was held on February 27, 1965. Acting as coordinator was Alexander Nowicki, City Planner for Oak Ridge. Those in attendance were: Evan Means, Clinch-Powell Valley Association; F. R. Bruce and H. D. Smith, Boy Scouts; David Campbell, Anderson County Conservation Board; B. M. Robinson, AEC; Robert P. Ball, Oak Ridge Memorial Park; Eleanor DuBois, Helen K. Lewis, Julia Moore, members, and C. M. DuBois, President of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club; Ruth Davis, Oak Ridge Garden Clubs and Girl Scouts; L. R. Phillips, Kiwanis; Julia Hoppe, Campfire Girls; John Clark, Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce; A. R. Nowicki, City Planner; A. A. Foster, Grace Foster, John Selfridge, and J. D. Amundson, interested citizen. UT personnel in attendance were: B. S. Pickett, Horticulture Department; E. E. C. Clebsch and H. R. DeSelm, Botany Department; Robert MacDonald, Forestry Department. A. R. Nowicki was appointed temporary chairman; Evan Means, temporary secretary.

NAMING THE SOCIETY

At the next meeting, March 20, 1965, the purpose and goals of an arboretum society were discussed. The Society was to be named the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society (UTAS); proposed goals were to be the following: Publication of an Arboretum Bulletin; establishment of undergraduate scholarship funds; establishment of graduate assistantships; organization of work and/or study groups to develop certain areas of the Arboretum; fundraising; information service. Eugene Joyce was appointed chairman of charter and by-laws; Don McKay, nominating chairman; and A. R. Nowicki, promotional chairman.

A meeting was held on April 20, 1965, to receive the charter of incorporation as a non-profit organization and to elect officers. Those elected to office were: Alex Nowicki, President; Charles Mahoney, Vice-president; Eleanor DuBois, Secretary; George Gerhart, Treasurer. Recognition was taken of the Society's primary purpose for which specific actions and goals had already been established, namely: to promote interest and participation in the study and enjoyment of trees, shrubs, and other plants. Membership at this time was eighty people. A complete list of Arboretum officers from 1965 through the present is found in Table 1 in the Appendix.

The beginning years of UTAS in 1965-66 were active ones. The Society began many programs which have continued to the present time. In March 1966 a Newsletter was sent to the membership; the first of twenty-two subsequent Newsletters designed to keep each member informed of UTAS activities. It carried news of the first general meeting, open to the public, which was followed by guided tours of the Arboretum. Over two hundred eighty five people came. Another program was begun when the first of

thirteen Bulletins was published and sent to the members in the summer of 1965. The first Plant Sale was held on June 18, 1966, as a fund-raising project. The Plant Sale funds were to become the means of financing the summer student employment program. In 1966, David Rugh, a Maryville College student, became the first of ten students who have participated in this program.

The period of 1965-66 brought many encouraging developments at the Arboretum. Better office space than the guardhouse became available when Robert Ball, UTAS Trustee and a stockholder in the Memorial Park Cemetery, offered temporary use of half of the cemetery building; a 1955 half-ton pickup truck was bought with UTAS funds; plant materials valued at over a thousand dollars were donated to the Arboretum by the Tennessee Nurseryman's Association. A system for maintaining a computerized list of plants in the Arboretum was introduced by UTAS research assistant, Margaret Olson. (*Footnote 1*)

THE LEGISLATURE APPROPRIATES FUNDS

June 1966 was especially eventful for the Arboretum. The UT Board of Trustees asked the state legislature to appropriate \$200,000 for an Arboretum and Agricultural Conference Center with provision of money to upgrade and improve roads, construct bridges, and build a residence for the Arboretum Director.

Arboretum progress during 1966-67 included the construction and planting of a Muscadine Grape arbor which was designed and planted by Bob and Mary Smith and sponsored, in part, by the Oak Ridge Pilot Club; the construction of a plastic greenhouse; and of a foundation for a potting shed. The nucleus of a collection of rare dwarf plants was acquired when Bob MacDonald (*Footnote 2*) brought them back from a tour of arboreta he made in conjunction with his presentation of an invited paper to the International Horticulture Congress. A dwarf conifer house was designed at this time by Shirley Yuille (*Footnote 3*), who also supervised the plantings.

UTAS activities in 1966-67 and the principal members who participated were the following: work on the grounds – Bruce Lamond, Margaret Peterson, Louise Taylor, Helen Warren, and Donny Williams; welcome to visitors; Charles Mahoney, Helen Lewis, Bob and Mary Smith, and Katherine Stelzner. The second Plant Sale was pronounced a “rousing success . . . some \$200 worth of plants were sold.” Summer students, financed, in part, by plant sale funds were Allen Coggins, Mike Countess, Carol Macklin, and David Rugh.

July 1967 stands out in UTAS history. At that time, a policy change with regard to the Arboretum was announced by the UT Agricultural Experiment Station officials. Formerly, the project outline for the Arboretum (1964) had made provision for a broad, interdisciplinary program incorporating the objectives applicable to botany, forestry, and horticulture. The new policy limited the objectives of the Arboretum program to one which was forestry-oriented. This raised a question concerning what would be the future role to be filled by UTAS.

Another important date in the Society's early history was February 1968. It was then that UTAS president, Ed Clebsch, announced to the Board of Directors that effective March 15, Bob MacDonald was resigning as UT Arboretum Director to accept the Directorship of the John J. Tyler Arboretum at Lima, Pa. A month later, March 1968, James S. Kring, UT Forest Manager, was placed in charge of the Arboretum.

By June 1968 some of the growth and transition problems for the Society began to be resolved. This was reflected at the annual meeting when John Barrett read a memo from John Swing, Dean of the Agricultural Experiment Station. Swing's memo stated the objectives of the Arboretum to be the following: to establish a collection of trees, including mutants and those plants having commercial value as forest species from which materials may be obtained for breeding and propagation; to provide a place open to the public where individuals or groups may study the forest associations which are adapted to the environment of Tennessee. The memo outlined the ways by which the Society could support the effective operation and continuing development of the Arboretum. These ways were principally that of providing personnel to keep the Arboretum open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays and to guide visitors on tours of the Arboretum. The Society also could provide scholarships for graduate students; aid in the preparation of a National Science Foundation grant proposal; give assistance with the dwarf conifer house and with the two nurseries.

The year 1970 was one of consolidation and progress. The Arboretum at that time was comprised of several miles of foot trails and roads maintained for public use, and of over 2000 labeled plants representing 600 species. The office was moved from the cemetery to the Arboretum grounds. The new office was a potting shed salvaged by Bob and Mary Smith from the old guardhouse that had been the first Arboretum office. UTAS volunteers kept the Arboretum open to the public on weekends during May, June, and July; guided tours were led by Lenore Gundlach, Margaret Peterson, Bill Rainey, and Mary Smith; UTAS funds provided for UT graduate students to keep the Arboretum open on Fall weekends. Two successful plant sales were held in March and in May with Bob and Mary Smith as chairmen. UTAS history achieved a milestone in 1970 with the publication of the Children's Trail Guides. The material for the guides had been compiled by Carol Mackho, summer student; edited by UT professors, Ed Clebsch and A. M. Evans and by Bessie Huffman, Principal of Elm Grove School; illustrated by Caroline Weaver; and printed by Mary Ann Gibbons.

The year 1971 was a quiet, progressive year for UTAS. The history of the Society was requested by the Oak Ridge Historical Society for inclusion in the Archives list at the Public Library where histories of all the major organizations are to be found. The Arboretum was kept open to the public on weekends by Allen Coggins, who also gave talks to several garden clubs, as did Bill Rainey.



The Forestry Experiment Stations and Arboretum headquarters building constructed in 1975 was an immense improvement in services to visitors. The building is shown here with the annual UTAS spring plant patrons.

A PLAN FOR A NEW OFFICE BUILDING

The year 1972 brought a number of items of good news. In the summer, John Barrett announced that UT representatives had selected the Knoxville firm of Cooper and Perry, architects, to draw up plans for an Arboretum office building. The UT Forestry Department in cooperation with the University Engineer were developing detailed floor plans for the building. September brought a change in administration for the Arboretum. Richard M. Evans became Superintendent of the Oak Ridge Forestry Stations and Arboretum upon the retirement of James S. Kring. Also at this time, a reorganization at UT placed the forestry experimental property under the management of the Forestry Experiment Stations within the UT Agricultural Experiment Stations. In November, when Richard Evans met with UTAS Board of Directors, he reported on plans for the new building and for construction of new roads.

Public recognition of the Arboretum came in two forms in the Spring of 1973. Arboretum Trails were designated as part of the Tennessee Recreation Trail System and public visits to the Arboretum were encouraged by the Knoxville Arts Festival and the Melton Hill Council of Garden Clubs. Arboretum projects completed during 1973 were the development of a rock garden and the publication of a visitor's guide to birds in the Arboretum. These were the work of James Morton, summer student.

The UTAS Summer Bulletin of 1974 carried good news: "The most exciting thing now happening at the Arboretum is the construction of a new Forestry Stations and Arboretum Headquarters building."

The Arboretum in October 1974 was designated for the first time as the location for the annual Forestry and Arboretum Field Day. This event is held every fall by the UT Agricultural Experiment Station at one of the six Forestry Field Stations. 1974 brought development of another trail to the Arboretum. Robin Hitner, 1974 summer student, designed and constructed the Lost Chestnut Trail which is built around the life and death of American Chestnut trees. The major UTAS program for members was a

special Bonsai presentation held in cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Bonsai Society. Bill Rainey coordinated the program which was open to the public.



Visitors brave the elements to participate in the many programs at the Arboretum. Over 20,000 people annually visit the Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum.

DEDICATION OF A NEW ARBORETUM

The year 1975 was really outstanding in the history of UTAS. The official dedication of the new Arboretum and Forestry Headquarters building was held on November 19, with UTAS providing refreshments. Principal speakers at the ceremonies were E. J. Boling, UT President; Webster Pendergrass, Vice-President of UT Institute of Agriculture; and Keith Bissell, Floterial Representative. Speeches briefly reviewed the history of the Arboretum and reminded those present that an arboretum is “a place where native and exotic trees and shrubs are cultivated for scientific and educational purposes.” Richard Evans conducted visitors through the new building and UT vans carried visitors around the grounds. Tour guides from UT were J. Barrett, Head of Forestry; E. Buckner, Associate Professor of Forestry; D. B. Williams, Head of Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design; Hendrik van de Werken, Associate Professor of OHL D; and A. J. Sharp, Professor of Botany.

DEDICATION OF A NEW ARBORETUM

Arboretum development at this time included some 250 acres, with 80 to 85 acres mapped for public visitation. There were nearly eight miles of roads and two and a half miles of trails maintained for public use. Over two thousand plants had been labeled; these represented 750 species and varieties. The new building, landscaped by the Arboretum staff according to a design proposed by D. B. Williams and Hendrik van de Werken, was a demonstration of effective use of native plants in the home landscape.

This was indeed an eventful time in the history of UTAS! The Society had raised funds by means of plant sales and membership dues in order to supply furniture for the library, superintendent’s office, and conference room in the new building. In addition, the Society had provided books for the Arboretum library.

The years 1976-77 brought a number of changes to UTAS. The Spring-Summer Bulletin, with its cover picture of the dedication of the new building, was the last of the UTAS Bulletins to be published. The Society had found them beyond the resources available. The Plant Sale became the responsibility of Lenore Gundlach upon the retirement of Bob and Mary Smith who had been associated with the sale since 1966 and chairmen since 1970. For the first time, UTAS shared the cost with UT of a graduate assistantship. The recipient was Roberta Patey. The investigation for her thesis, "Identification of Preferred Landscape as an Initial Step in Developing Guidelines for Mapping the Scenic Quality of Forest," was performed at the Arboretum under the direction of Richard Evans. Roberta was also a summer student employee in 1975 and again in 1976 along with Roger Steed. In these years the tours were conducted by UTAS volunteer guides Jane Akers, Lois Good, Betts Higgins, and Margaret Peterson. This successful program was reduced by UTAS when the revised Trail Guides published by UT made self-guiding tours possible. On special requests UTAS volunteers continue to conduct guided tours. In 1976-77 UTAS sponsored a series of public lectures. D. B. Williams presented lectures on the problems encountered in landscaping home grounds in Tennessee. A. J. Sharp gave an illustrated lecture on the subject of endangered plants. Another change for UTAS in 1977 came with the retirement of Bob Smith after almost ten years as treasurer of the Society, and eleven years as a member of the Board of Directors.

March 1978 brought the initiation of a new UTAS program when the first issue of a News Bulletin was published with Lois Good as Editor. This new publication combined the former publications of Newsletter and Bulletin into a short form designed to keep UTAS members informed, on a regular basis, of activities and business of the Society. The public lecture program was continued in 1978 with Duncan Callicott, Director of the Tennessee Botanical Gardens at Cheekwood, speaking about public gardens and arboreta. The 1978 Plant Sale offered a new feature; D. B. Williams was present to help the public with questions of plant identification, with problems concerning plant culture, and suggestions for use of plants in the landscape. UTAS was unable this year to finance the summer student program. It was fortunate that the TVA Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) program was able to provide personnel to help at the Arboretum. Another new event was initiated in 1978. The first annual Fall Walk was cosponsored by UTAS and the UT Arboretum. It included guided walks to observe birds and other wildlife, trees and shrubs, landscape plants and wildflowers. UTAS served refreshments.



The hills, woods, streams and other natural features of the property provide an attractive setting to which the plant collections were carefully added.

THE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT THREAT

The year 1978 held much tension because the Arboretum area was being threatened by developers wanting the site for a municipal airport! During the summer of 1978 public forums were held to discuss possible sites in the Oak Ridge area where an airport could be built, but in September the Oak Ridge City Council announced its choice of the Chestnut Ridge site on the UT Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum. UT announced its refusal to sell the land and emphasized the importance of the research being conducted on the area. UTAS President, George Eckerd, sent an urgent letter (*Footnote 4*) to all UTAS members alerting them of the threat that an airport would be to the Arboretum. A public forum was held in April 1979 on the issue of an airport on the UT research land. The meeting was sponsored by the Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning. Tennessee Native Plant Society Representative Bob Farmer spoke against locating an airport on the Chestnut Ridge site; Richard Evans, Superintendent of the Forestry Station and Arboretum, said that “an airport at Chestnut Ridge would disrupt the University’s education program there, and even threaten its existence.”

The year 1979, nevertheless, saw UTAS continuing its activities while the fate of the Arboretum remained in balance. Once again the Plant Sale was a success and again the public was offered advice on plants and on landscaping. UTAS was again able to help with the summer student program; the student selected with Jenny Mercer, a UT graduate in wildlife and fisheries. A new fund-raising project was initiated with the sale of Arboretum T-shirts. In October the Arboretum was again the location for the UT

Annual Forestry and Arboretum Field Day; UTAS served refreshments for this event as well as for the second annual Fall Walk.

In the closing days of 1979, petitions were circulated among the voters of Oak Ridge in an effort to give the citizens of Oak Ridge an opportunity to vote for or against the building of an airport. The effort was initiated by the UT Arboretum Society, The Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, and the Tennessee Native Plant Society. These organizations also made public a map pointing out the impact of the proposed airport on the research programs of the UT Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum. Thus 1980 began with the future of the Arboretum very much unsettled, although a hopeful note appeared in January when UTAS sponsored the premier of Richard Evans' program, "The Arboretum-A Place for all Seasons."

Members who have served one or more terms on the Board of Directors:

Ben Adams, Howard Adler, Jane Akers, Stanley Auerbach, Robert Ball, Eunice Begun, Aubrey Bradshaw, Allen Coggins, H. R. DeSelm, A. Murray Evans, Rima Farmer, Frank Galyon, Jack Gibbons, Ralph Hall, Jo Henderson, John Hill, Tom Hill, Lennie Jeffreys, Mary Beth Klepper, Jody Krause, Hugh Long, Joe Marasco, John Million, George Moore, Ruth Moore, David Novelli, Margaret Peterson, B. S. Pickett, Herman Postma, Richard Raridon, Sam Shoup, Mary Smith, Ed Struxness, D. B. Williams.

The following people were honorary members of UTAS by virtue of their offices: Governor Buford Ellington 1965, Frank Clement 1966, Winfield Dunn 1971, Ray Blanton 1976, Lamar Alexander 1978, President of UT Andrew Holt 1965, Edward Boling 1971, Dean of the College of Agriculture Webster Pendergrass 1965, W. W. Armistead 1979.

The following people were Trustees of UTAS: Robert Ball, 1966; Carl Koella, 1967; Jack Gibbons, Bob MacDonald, William Pollard, John Brennan, 1969.

Footnotes 1-Margaret Olson's contribution to computerization of plant records for the International Plant Records Committee was done in cooperation with Bob MacDonald.

2-Bob MacDonald, as chairman of the International Plant Records Committee, presented papers on the subject of electronic data processing of plant records at the American Horticultural Congress, the annual meeting of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, and the International Symposium on Information Problems in the Natural Sciences.

3-Shirley Yuille, a UTAS volunteer, holds the Royal Horticultural Society Diploma in Horticulture.

4-Excerpts from the letter follow: "this tract of land now known as the UT Forestry Experiment station and Arboretum was deeded to the University of Tennessee on August 21, 1961 by the Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare. Allowances within the deed stipulate that the University must use the land for educational purposes which benefit the public. Examples of educational usage of the land in question are the following research programs which are presently in progress: 1. A nationwide cooperative study which aims to provide genetically improved seeds for producers of

white pine. 2. A 10-year study of the effects of fertilization and irrigation on the growth of sweetgum, loblolly pine and yellow poplar.

3. A yellow poplar heritability test. 4. A Douglas fir seed orchard. 5. A white pine seed orchard. 6. A forested watershed study. 7. An American chestnut progeny test to develop blight resistant strains. The direct and immediate result of the proposed airport will be the loss of these projects. The construction of an airport on the proposed site would necessitate the re-evaluation of the entire UT Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum program of research, development and education." On December 5, 1978 the University of Tennessee announced its refusal to sell the land.



Change of seasons only serve to highlight the natural beauty in the Arboretum that is captured in an audiovisual program "The Arboretum – A Place for all Seasons."

The author wishes to thank the following people for help in preparing the manuscript for publication: Lois Good, Lenore Gundlach, and Richard Raridon.

Officers of the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society 1965-1990

Year Elected	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
1965	Alex Nowicki	Charles Mahoney	Mrs. Charles Dubois	George Gerhart
1966	Charles Mahoney	Edward Clebsch	Nancy Ellis	George Gerhart
1967	Edward Clebsch	Lenore Gundlach	Catherine Johnson	Catherine Johnson
1968	Harold Byck	Lenore Gundlach	Emogene Pate	Bob Smith
1969	Harold Byck	Bill Rainey	Emogene Pate	Bob Smith
1970	Bill Rainey	Betsy Ellertson	Emogene Pate	Bob Smith
1971	Bill Rainey	Betsy Ellertson	Jo Ann Hall	Bob Smith
1972	Mike Countess	Larry Landau	Jo Ann Hall	Bob Smith
1973	Leone Gengozian	Mark Robinson	Jo Ann Hall	Bob Smith
1974	Leone Gengozian	George Eckerd	Jo Ann Hall	Bob Smith
1975	Leone Gengozian	George Eckerd	Jo Ann Hall	Bob Smith
1976	Ed Phares	Mark Robinson	June Peishel	Bob Smith
1977	Ed Phares	George Eckerd	Larry Landau	Anne George Dobbins
1978	George Eckerd	Larry Landau	Betts Higgins	Anna George Dobbins
1979	George Eckerd	Larry Landau	Lois Good	Anna George Dobbins
1980	George Eckerd	Larry Landau	Lois Good	Anna George Dobbins
1981	George Eckerd	Larry Landau	Lois Good	Anna George Dobbins
1982	Larry Landau	Don Williams	Lois Good	Anna George Dobbins
1983	Larry Landau	Don Williams	Lois Good	Anna George Dobbins
1984	Lois Good	Ed Nicholson	Jo Ann Hall	Anna George Dobbins
	Ed Nicholson (filled unexpired term)			
1985	Harold Elmore	Ralph Jordan	Jo Ann Hall	Viola Ergen
1986	Harold Elmore	Walter Pietrzak	Jo Ann Hall	Viola Ergen
1987	Harold Elmore	Walter Pietrzak	Willard Witte	Viola Ergen
1988	Harold Elmore	Walter Pietrzak	Willard Witte	Viola Ergen
1989	Ted Rogers	Betts Higgins	Diantha Pare	Viola Ergen
1990	Ted Rogers	Betts Higgins	Diantha Pare	Viola Ergen

Officers of the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society 1965 – 2020

UT Arboretum Society History Silver Anniversary Update

UT Arboretum Society History
Silver Anniversary Update

The University of Tennessee Arboretum Society
Silver Anniversary Update Compiled by Eunice
Begun

Edited by Walter Pietrzak

For a complete detailed early history of the
Society see the
History of The University of Tennessee
Arboretum Society

**Published July 1981 In Memorium
The Society wishes to remember
Lois Good
Lenore Gundlach
Jo Ann Hall
Margaret Peterson
Mary Smith
for their dedication and service.**

The Formative Years

“Prior to the early 1940’s... the area was heavily farmed. Virginia Pine and Shortleaf Pine now cover most of the old fields, but Yellow Poplar and some Black Walnut are found on sites in these fields where the soil is better. The rest of the... is largely second-growth Oak and Hickory forest in what was originally Oak and Chestnut forest.”

Thus read the description for the 2260 acre tract located in Oak Ridge which was transferred to the University of Tennessee by the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare in August 1961. The stipulated restriction with this transfer of ownership was that the tract be used for “teaching, research and demonstration”. Working within these guide lines, a University committee submitted its report in December 1962 outlining the objectives for the use of the Oak Ridge forest. This report carried in it the recommendation of Dr. A. J. Sharp, Botany Professor (now Distinguished Professor Emeritus) that a portion of the forest be designated as an arboretum. With the approval of this report, the Oak Ridge forest became the University of Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station and Arboretum; with the objectives... “to establish a collection of woody plants adapted to the climate of Tennessee... to utilize and expand existing plant groups and preserve such areas as have special values for ecologic study. . . to provide space for a collection of mutants of woody plants...”. In April 1964, the University of Tennessee Forestry Department started work on the Arboretum with Robert MacDonald, Assistant Professor in Forestry, named as Experiment Station and Arboretum Director.

With the Arboretum now a reality, a “friends of the Arboretum group” was organized and met on February 27, 1965. At the next meeting on March 20, 1965, the group decided to call itself the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society (UTAS) with the proposed goals of publication of an Arboretum bulletin, establishment of undergraduate scholarship funds, establishment of graduate assistantships, organization of work and/or study groups to develop certain areas of the Arboretum, fund raising and information service. The third meeting was held on April 20, 1965 at which time the Charter of Incorporation was received and the first slate of officers was elected. (A

complete list of Officers through the present is found in the Appendix.) The Society membership at the time was 80 people.

The new Arboretum in the 1966-67 time period acquired a rare dwarf conifer collection and received a state appropriation for the Director's residence. The new Society volunteers were busy with the construction of a plastic green house, building the foundation for a potting shed and planting the muscadine grape arbor which had been designed by Society members.

An early Society fundraiser included a plant sale in June 1967 and was termed a "rousing success" when \$200 worth of plants were sold. About this time changes were also in the wind. In March of 1968, James Kring replaced Robert MacDonald as Arboretum Director. In addition, the Agricultural Experiment Station and Arboretum roles were redefined from the original broad interdisciplinary botanical forestry and horticultural objectives to more limited forestry oriented objectives. To answer growing concerns about the future of Society roles in its support of the Arboretum, the University issued a statement which spelled them out. Except for the ability to organize work and/or study groups to develop certain areas of the Arboretum the roles remained unchanged from those originally envisioned when the Society was formed. Thus, the Society could continue to perform and function similar to the way it did in the recent past.

The 1970's

With just a few months into the decade, the Society, using materials compiled by a summer student, drew on skills of the membership to put together and publish the Children's Trail Guides. This was followed in 1971 with the publication of the First History of the Society for inclusion in the archives of the Oak Ridge Public Library.

1972 was another year of change and new beginnings for the Experiment Station and Arboretum. A reorganization at the University placed the Oak Ridge forest under direct management of the University of Tennessee Forest Experiment Stations. At about the same time, James Kring retired and Richard M. Evans was named Superintendent of the renamed U.T. Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum. On top of these changes was the announcement of the start of design for the Forestry Experiment Stations office and Arboretum visitors center building. The Society continued doing what it had grown used to doing. In 1973 and 1974, the Society supported summer students, published a visitors guide to birds in the Arboretum and designed and constructed the Lost Chestnut Trail. By 1975, the Arboretum had developed to the point where it included 250 acres with 80 to 85 acres mapped for public visitation. There were nearly eight miles of roads and two and a half miles of maintained trails. Over two thousand plants had been labeled, representing 750 species and plant varieties. The new Forestry Stations headquarters and Arboretum visitors center building was completed and dedicated. Society funds were used to provide office and conference room furniture and books and furniture for the library.

With the publication by the University of new trail guides in 1976, self-guiding Arboretum tours became possible. This led to the decision by the Society to discontinue guided tours except for special occasions. The Society also decided to discontinue the "Bulletin" because of limited resources. In a shortened format the News Bulletin appeared in 1978 principally devoted to keeping the members informed of Society business and activities.

Through the '70's, the Plant Sale grew by leaps and bounds allowing the Society to continue and expand its support efforts which required funds. But more than that, the Plant Sale committee were ever particular about the quality and variety of plants offered. New and improved cultivars were and are continually introduced to the community. Planning begins in the fall with just a few people involved and builds up to over 50 member volunteers on the days of the Sale. The Plant Sales then and now feature knowledgeable volunteers to answer questions pertaining to culture and the use of plants in the landscape.

As part of its continuing information program the Society sponsors an annual lecture series. The series draws on University and professional specialists to present well-rounded plant related programs. In 1978, the Society participated with the University in the first Arboretum walk. Sponsoring and co-sponsoring Arboretum walks, like the lecture series, have now become another permanent part of the Society's programs for the general public.

The years 1978-79 were years of tension for the Society and the Forestry Experiment Station and Arboretum. The tension arose out of Chestnut Ridge being named as the preferred site for the location of the proposed Oak Ridge airport. This siting included those portions of the Oak Ridge forest which would destroy ongoing long-term forestry experiments, research projects, and, in fact, jeopardize the existence of the Experiment Station and Arboretum. The Society, along with the public, the Tennessee Council of Garden Clubs, the Tennessee Native Plant Society and the Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, united to speak out against the siting in the media, council meetings, and public forums.

The 1980's

Tensions arising out of the airport siting carried over and extended into the mid-'80's. The issue faded when monetary matters overrode all other considerations resulting in the shelving of the airport proposals. The Society breathed a sigh of relief and welcomed the opportunity to get back to devoting its energies to what it does best.

1985 saw the beginning of a long-term Society project with the first planting in what is planned to be a world class holly garden. A second large scale planting completed in the fall of 1989 brought the number of cultivars planted up to 100. When completed, the garden will feature a collection of over 500 species, varieties and cultivars of the genus *Ilex* – all donated – with planting by the membership.

At this time the Society extended its support outside the Arboretum when it co-sponsored the observation of Arbor Day with the City of Oak Ridge and the Oak Ridge Beautification Committee. This team work has continued to the present time. The high point of this team effort occurred in 1989 when the City of Oak Ridge was awarded and flew the National Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA flag.

In 1987, the annual meeting for the election of officers was expanded to include an awards ceremony. The intent being to acknowledge persons for their dedication and support of the objectives of the Society and the Arboretum. This first ceremony singled out Dr. A. J. Sharp, the University of Tennessee Distinguished Professor Emeritus who was so instrumental for the existence of the Arboretum. Throughout the history of the Society, Dr. Sharp has been continually visible serving as lecturer and long time Board member. Two years later, in 1989, the Society awarded special recognition to Ruth Moore, garden columnist, knowledgeable participant in plant sales, and Board member on more than several occasions. Now, in 1990, the Society extends its recognition to Richard M. Evans. Richard is a long term U.T. Forestry Experiment Stations and Arboretum Superintendent. As the University representative, Richard has served as the mentor to guide the Society within the frame work of University policies relating to the Arboretum.

1987 was also the year of the first Society sponsored membership tours to gardens and arboreta in Tennessee and neighboring states. The first tour went east into North Carolina. Subsequent tours travelled into Georgia and Alabama while the 1990 tour travelled into Kentucky and middle Tennessee. The idea behind the tours is exposure to what other arboreta are doing and becoming acquainted with sources of support. As such, the tours are not strictly for pleasure, although that is allowed.

After a dry spell of a few years, the Society revived the publication of a periodical. Disregarding any previous format and named by a contest, The Leaflet appeared in 1989 and is being distributed to the membership on a quarterly basis. The intent is to provide interesting and informative plant related articles, a calendar of Society and related events, book reviews, recipes, poetry, and whatever may be appropriate. The Leaflet asks and receives from the membership submittals of articles of interest.

The Year 1990: The Silver Anniversary Year

Special activities of the Silver Anniversary year that have not been touched upon include the creation of a wild flower rock garden. This 1990 creation concentrates on aesthetically pleasing flower species that occur on local rocky ledges and outcroppings.

For the past few years, the Society has been donating and planting plants in the 'Heath Cove'. In the fall of 1990, the planting added 31 rhododendron bringing the total of recent additions up to 100 cultivars.

Back in 1989, the society again broadened its support role when it established a book committee to supply books and video tapes on horticultural subjects to public libraries in

the surrounding communities. In 1990, the first recipient of Society purchased books was the Oak Ridge Public Library. The next recipient is about to be named.

The Society has set aside funds and has established a task group to select a general purpose garden shelter for installation in the Arboretum. It is anticipated this goal will be accomplished within the next two years.

In its twenty-five years, the Society has matured and grown to over 300 active memberships. Activities mentioned above are just the specials over and above activities which have become so routine they are taken for granted, but they are there.

The Society's present President, Dr. Ted Rogers, as we wind down our Silver Anniversary year says... "As long as the members remain dedicated to the preservation of trees, to a healthy environment and to sound educational values, the Society will flourish for years to come."