

LEAF

Living on the Edge of Arden Forests

Issue XIII, Winter 2024

With a Little Help from Our Forest Friends

And no, we don't mean the four-legged kind. We are talking about our friends and neighbors who value the Ardens' woodlands, enjoy our green spaces and support the work of the Arden Forest Committee in many different ways. When asked how we get such great volunteers to help us, the answer is simple. We just ask.

Like Cecilia Vore (pictured above), whose animated storytelling brought *He Lion, Bruh Bear and Bruh Rabbit* and *Little Eight John* to life during our "Hunter's Moon Woods Walk" on October 27. If you missed it, both stories can be found in "*The People Could Fly*" by Virginia Hamilton (with illustrations by the amazing Leo and Diane Dillon). The companion audiobook features the unmistakable voice of actor James Earl Jones. But if you ask us, we all agree that Cecilia's version was way better.

Then just as the full moon appeared, Arden musicians Pete Compo, Stevie and Paul Nolan and Ardentown's Joe Painter added their own special sing-along magic to the evening's festivities. You can't beat great music, an unseasonably warm fall night and a roaring Indian Circle bonfire to make an evening special. Oh, and don't forget the s'mores! A very special "thank you" to Ed Rohrbach, John DiGiacoma and Eliot Levin for supplying the wood! That's why they say, "It takes a Village"!



Join US for Woods Work!

Speaking of "just ask." That's how forest committee member Eric Reed, pictured left, and volunteer Michael O'Neill, pictured right, both came our way.

Chances are, you already know Eric Reed. Since he moved to the Ardens two and a half years ago, Eric could be considered a "super volunteer." He's an active member of both Arden Club and ACRA (Arden Community Recreation Association) boards as well as a "first responder" for the Arden Forest Committee. First responder you ask?

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Recent Woods Work



Beverly Clendening, Eric Reed, Michael O'Neill and Carol Larson complete some needed trail repairs from Cherry Lane to Indian Circle in the Arden Woods.



Beverly Clendening, Lisa Wolfe and Michael O'Neill attack invasives off of the fire lane near the water tower in Sherwood Forest.



Paul Nolan, Carol Larson and Eric Reed plant trees and shrubs at the Mill Race Road property on Naamans Creek.

Eric is typically the first one in the woods to witness a tree down or when significant stormwater damage has made a trail impassable. Take the case of the missing bridge on Naamans Creek. We can thank Eric and Arden Town Assembly Chair Jeffrey Politis for solving that one. With a few hand drills and some significant rebar, the two made quick work of reinstalling and stabilizing the wooden structure. It shouldn't float downstream again.

But, its not just Ardenites who know and benefit from Eric's "can do" attitude. We're betting that every canine in town knows there's a high likelihood there are treats in his pockets when he heads out with his pup Rory for their woods walks. It was one of those early walks that led Eric to "come on out" to not only volunteer on a weekly basis, but to successfully run to be a Forest Committee member.

"The forest is strongly connected to Arden's mission," Eric reflected. "The forest muffles noise, cleans the air and serves as a buffer between us and the outside environment. I enjoy being an advocate for our woodlands as well as working in the woods."

"Arden works for me because of the high level of volunteerism and civic mindedness," he added. "I know more people here than in any other community that I have lived before. People here are easy to get to know."

Volunteer Michael O'Neill grew up on the east coast, Long Island, and went to college in Baltimore and spent the majority of his adult years in the high country of Colorado. When he and his wife, Brooke, decided to move back to the east coast a little over a year ago, they were lucky to find Arden. Michael got connected to the Forest Committee through Eric Reed who had been instrumental in helping the O'Neills purchase their new home. During the process, Eric referenced the many gilds and other ways of becoming active in the community and mentioned that he was on the Forest Committee and that we were always looking for good people. Michael promised Eric that if by chance they acquired the Millers Road property, he would volunteer for the Forest Committee. Michael has honored that commitment since moving here in October of 2022.

"I like being outside and in the woods," Michael stated when asked why he volunteers. "We are not in an office, we are out in the dirt and in the woods. The results are tangible. And, I enjoy the comradery and team-work and banter of the day and the task. Volunteering is a win-win. If you like being outside and working in the dirt, you should join us."

Arden Forest Committee

Current elected members:

Bev Clendening & Carol Larson, Co-Chairs
Jess Colgan-Snyder, Eric Reed, Lisa Wolfe

Buzz Ware Village Center
2119 The Highway, Wilmington, DE 19810

LEAF Editor: Lisa Wolfe

Looking for a "quick" way to keep up with what's going on in the woods? Just follow the QR codes to the Arden Forest Committee website & Forests of the Ardens Facebook pages.

Website

Facebook

Certifiably Supporting Community & Wildlife in the Ardens

Jill Althouse-Wood may have moved on from the Arden Forest Committee to lead the creation of the Arden Artisans Collective, but her passion for supporting our community, wildlife and woodlands has never wavered. She continues to champion and serve as the point person for the Ardens' certification as one of five National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitats in the First State. We asked her to tell us about the initiative, how things got started and why it should continue to be important to our communities.

Q: So, Community Wildlife Certification. How did that come about here in the Ardens?

A: At a committee meeting, we discussed that someone in Ardentown, who no longer lives there, had started the process of getting Ardentown certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat, but hadn't followed through. I was curious, so I looked up what Arden would need to do to qualify. There were several categorizations of qualifications which included things like outreach and education in addition to a percentage of properties that were individually registered as wildlife habitats. The list included a lot of activities and programs that the Ardens already had in place, if informally.

Q: You made the decision to apply collectively as The Ardens, instead of individually. Why?

A: At the time, there were less than fifty communities that were certified across the nation. Given all that we are doing collectively in the three communities with woods clean-up, the Arden Page and LEAF articles, the Spotted Lanternfly taskforce, ACRA stream studies, even things like ACRA's annual Pancakes in the Woods event, it made sense to join forces. It would be more impactful and involve more people. In many ways, the Ardens are a model for what community can be. With all our natural resources and spirit of volunteerism, we thought we could be an example to other communities.

Q: The Ardens applied for all their points and got certified during the pandemic in early 2021. Was that difficult to pull off?

A: In many ways it was ideal. We were all here, enjoying our environment in ways we didn't always have time to do. We could be outside with one another in the community more safely than we could be indoors. We all still craved connection. So weed pulls, stream cleanups, hikes became ways to engage. People had time to devote to their yards and bring them up to code to qualify as wildlife habitats. It was a great thing to feel like we were accomplishing something when the world seemed to be standing still.



Arden Forest Committee Co-Chairs Beverly Clendening and Carol Larson show off some of the 192 native plants the Ardens received for being re-certified as a National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat. Of the eleven varieties received, the natives found new homes at the Buzz Ware Village Center, Arden Gild Hall, around the Greens as well as in the woodlands.

Q: What does re-certify every year involve?

A: For the most part, it involves documenting what we are doing in terms of ongoing programming and new projects. Having individuals certify their leaseholds continues to be important. One area for future growth that I would love to see is outreach to nearby subdivisions to encourage them to register their homes and neighborhoods. We decide the bounds of our area. We could be "The Ardens---and Beyond" if we got enough neighbors to certify their properties to satisfy the percentage requirement.

Q: How can residents in the Ardens and surrounding communities learn more?

A: To help communities, we developed a brochure that is on the Arden Forest Committee website. Or, you can just ask a member of the Arden Forest Committee for help by emailing forest@arden.delaware.gov.

An Introduction to the Arden Club Gardeners Gild

(With the hope of encouraging new members to join our delightfully friendly group.)

Who are we? The Gardeners Gild is a group of people with the common denominator of liking plants—a lot! We are a non-profit organization, operating as one of 11 Gilds of the Arden Club. Our members are residents of the Ardens, and of the surrounding communities.

What do we do? Well, we do all sorts of fun things! We tour, hike, craft, talk, party, learn, build, design, create and most importantly, we garden! We meet in the Upper Hall of the Arden Gild Hall on the 3rd Monday of each month—with about 20 people attending.

Last year, we hosted a workshop to build houses for our native bees and learned how to maintain a healthy habitat for these important pollinators. We joined our local plant expert for a lecture about spring ephemerals (the first plants to bloom each year). We learned how to compost. We walked in the Arden Woods, identifying the native plants along the way. We toured the University of Delaware's Botanic Gardens. We held a perennial sale and one for trees and shrubs—both at wholesale prices—and sold a wide variety of affordable plants at the annual Arden Fair. We gathered for a potluck garden party and created floral centerpieces for our holiday tables.

Want to join in on the fun? Becoming a member is simple—just send an email to 787serendipity@gmail.com with a request to be added to our mailing list, and just like that, you are a member!

If you are fond of gardening, and are looking to get inspired, to learn new approaches, and—most importantly—to become a part of a warm and welcoming group, join us!

Hajni Halasz, Gardeners Gild Leader



Members of the Gardeners Gild joined Arden Forest Committee Co-Chair Beverly Clendening (standing center in striped sweater) to learn about winter seed sowing while it quietly snowed outside the Arden Gild Hall on January 15, 2024.

Learn the Art of Decoupage with the Arden Club Gardeners Gild

Our February meeting will be another craft-y one! Join us for a hands-on workshop led by Barbara Cool to learn how to decoupage clay flowerpots, and (hopefully!) end up with a one-of-a-kind, gorgeous keepsake to take home. We'll meet in the Upper Hall of the Arden Gild Hall on Monday, February 19 at 7:30 p.m.

All the materials will be provided (there is a suggested donation of $5, to offset material costs), and participants are encouraged to bring along a pair of small scissors and some paper napkins with interesting motifs to add to our napkin-inventory, thus widening the selection of available patterns.

Warning: this technique is so much fun that it can become addictive! After decoupaging the first flowerpot, it is hard to stop!

Please RSVP to 787serendipity@gmail.com before February 15 if you plan on attending! Join in on the fun!



SAVE THE DATE for the Save the Earth Day Clean-Up on April 13! Please plan to join us for our annual day in the woods! Details to follow!

LEAF, Living on the Edge of Arden Forests, is brought to you by the Arden Forest Committee on behalf of the Forests of the Ardens Collective. For additional information and copies of this newsletter, please visit arden.delaware.gov/committees/forest-committee or Forests of the Ardens Facebook page. To contact us, email forest@arden.delaware.gov.