

TREE UPDATES

Newton Tree Conservancy Kick-off Event. On the unexpectedly glorious last Sunday of October, the Newton Tree Conservancy held its kick-off event at City Hall (photos and report on our website). It was a great day despite intense competition from worthy events at both Angino Farm and Arnold Arboretum. A guided tour of the amazing specimen trees of the Newton Cemetery was ably led by Cris Criscitiello (see related item below on our “Newton Sentry” maple). Afterwards, a tulip tree was planted on Commonwealth Avenue by a planting crew of Girl Scouts and other assorted shovelers, with dedication by Mayor David Cohen. Michael Dosmann, Curator of Living Collections at the Arnold Arboretum, gave an excellent lecture on the challenges and rewards of urban forestry, and Marc Welch showed us a fascinating review of the history of Newton’s forestry department. Duane Hillis and David Backer filmed the day’s proceedings, so we can look forward to viewing the programs on TV. Thanks to all the volunteers and supporters who made the day a success! The NTC now goes into implementation mode: a year-end membership drive, and an educational event for the spring. Please see newtontreeconservancy.org for more information.

Acer saccharum “Newton Sentry”. One of Newton Cemetery’s specimen trees is particularly famous: featured in the Tree Walk and also in Michael Dosmann’s lecture, the “Newton Sentry” sugar maple is a columnar form like no maple ever seen. It was first discovered in 1871 growing at Claflin School in Newton, and when the school was undergoing construction the tree was moved in about 1875-1880 to its current spot in Newton Cemetery at the Walnut Street entrance. In 1885 Arnold Arboretum obtained cuttings, which became its own specimen tree (see the interesting article at <http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1150.pdf>). The descendants of our tree can be purchased at local nurseries (also marketed as “Columnare”). (It is perfect for a space-challenged planting site!)

Acorns – are there really none? Google and blogs indicate that there are next to none in our region; however I have heard of some exceptions, and various other parts of the country report bumper crops. Web searching indicates this is normal oak “masting” (the acorn crop is called the mast), with the occasional bumper crop that assures some seeds are left uneaten to survive to germinate, and the occasional year with fruits withheld keeping predators in line. (See the interesting review at <http://www.hastingsreserve.org/OakStory/Acorns2.html>) Theories of global warming and over-ample water this past season are vying with the claim that this is just basic normal natural selection. In any case, things do not look good for Newton’s current squirrel population.

Asian Long Horned Beetle. After discovery of the ALHB in August 2008, the quarantine area in Worcester was increased in October to 62 sq miles. As previously reported, the federal government is preparing to cut down infested trees and “inoculate” (chemically) neighboring at-risk trees. See the links to articles at our website. Marc Welch is active with the Tree Wardens association and keeps close tabs on the ALHB efforts in the state. He said that officials now believe the Worcester infestation may have

started around the same time as the infestation discovered in 1996 in Brooklyn NY (thought to be imported from packing crates). Luckily, the ALHB appears to be slow to move from one tree to another; however, the infestation in Worcester is also dangerously neighboring a forested area.

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