



## Under The Oaks

### Arboretum Newsletter

VOLUME 11

**Join us for the official City of Memphis Arbor Day at Memphis Botanic Garden, March 1, at 10:00 a.m.**

Memphis Botanic Garden, in partnership with Memphis City Beautiful, the local affiliate of Keep American Beautiful, will hold a tree planting event in observance of the official City of Memphis Arbor Day. The ceremony will take place on Friday, March 1, at 10:00 a.m., at Memphis Botanic Garden Horticulture Center, and will feature the planting of an Arizona Cypress.

The event is free and open to the public. It will include a tree seedling give-away as well as provide Cherry tree seedlings available for sale. Following the ceremony, seedlings will be given away throughout the day free with garden admission.



*Arbor Day 2012-Yoshino Cherry tree planting*

Arbor Day is an annual observance dedicated to the planting and conservation of trees. National Arbor Day is observed on the last Friday in April. However, because the ideal time to plant trees varies with the climate, Tennessee celebrates Arbor Day on the first Friday of March.

As the first designated Center of Excellence for Urban Forestry in Tennessee, the Memphis Botanic Garden is responsible for the promotion and enhancement of urban forestry within the regional area. The celebration of Arbor Day is important to the Garden and this observance will continue all month long with the “tagging” of 25 noteworthy trees to demonstrate just how valuable these assets can be.

---

## Tour the Tree Tags!

by Laurie Williams

Can you really put a price tag on trees? This March, as part of our month-long celebration of trees, Memphis Botanic Garden will “tag” 25 of our noteworthy trees to demonstrate just how valuable these assets can be. Throughout the month, during regular Garden hours, visitors can pick up a map at our front desk and take a free, self-guided tour highlighting the benefits that our woody friends offer over their lengthy lifetimes.



Memphis Botanic Garden has undertaken this project as part of our commitment as a certified Center of Excellence, to educate the community of the importance of trees by determining value via the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Benefits Calculator.

Trees in urban areas provide a number of

## The Luscious Fig - A Journey Through the Centuries

by Jenny Sabatier

In a 7000-year-old Neolithic settlement in Israel, archaeologists found dried figs. It isn't known if the trees were cultivated or wild, or even when fig trees first appeared on earth. They may be the earliest fruit trees that have survived to the present day. History is filled with tales of the fig trees impact on society.

The banyan fig, *Ficus bengalensis*, can develop aerial roots that grow down to earth and act as additional trunks, sometimes spreading the tree's canopy to over 400 ft. In Eastern Asia, the banyan is a sacred tree. Another species, *Ficus religiosa*, the pipal or bo tree, is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists. Over 2600 years ago, Prince Siddhartha Guatama left his court to search for the true meaning of life. Arriving at the tree sanctuary of Bodh Gaya in northeast India, he elected to sit under the great pipal tree, the sacred tree of Vishnu, to learn how all beings might be spared suffering. Once he had found the knowledge he sought, he became 'Budda', and the tree came to be known

important benefits. They help clean the air, curb storm water runoff, raise property values, sequester carbon, and reduce energy costs. In addition, trees offer significant aesthetic value. People respond to a grove of trees by feeling more serene and rested. Trees can be used in architecture and engineering to screen undesirable views, and to soften lines and angles.

As you tour the Garden, look for the large green tags on featured trees throughout the month of March. The dollar amount will offer an idea of the value of a particular tree, based on its size and species. The size of the tree is calculated by trunk diameter measured 4.5 feet above the ground. Some of the Garden's trees are larger than the calculator allows. We have done our best to estimate the value of these larger trees.

Understanding that trees do have a dollar value encourages people to view trees from a different perspective. You can find the value of trees in your own landscape using the Arbor Day Foundation's online resource at [www.treebenefits.com/calculator](http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator).

---

## Hazelnut or Filbert?

by Jenny Sabatier

The words 'hazelnut' and 'filbert' are sometimes interchangeable, but filbert is used to denote the European hazelnut, *Corylus avellana*,

as the bo or bodhi tree. Pictures from the first centuries of Buddhism portray an empty seat under the tree, illustrating that the Buddha was no longer imprisoned in his human identity, but was now one with the universe.

Our familiar fig tree, *Ficus carica*, is a handsome, semitropical species, hardy through zone 7, and can get up to 30 feet in height. It has smooth gray bark and striking, deeply veined large leaves with 3 to 7 lobes. What we consider the tree's 'fruit' is not a true fruit, but a skin which contains many seeds, the true fruit.



Figs can only be pollinated by wasps that are specific to the fig species. An unusual ritual of fertilization occurs between the caprifig (*Ficus Caprificus*), a wild bisexual species and the Smyrna and San Pedro figs which are cultivated female species. A tiny wasp lays its pupae inside the caprifig. When the wasp emerges from the fruit it is covered in pollen since all fig flowers are inside the fruit. The wasp pollinator

which leads the world market in this popular edible, while hazelnut, *Corylus americana* is more shrub-like and has a smaller nut. It grows wild in the USA, and can be found in woodlands, pastures, and roadsides

*Corylus avellana* grows to 20 feet high and although many shoots develop from the roots, it can be fashioned as a small tree by trimming the lower limbs. *C. avellana* has many cultivars, including Contorta, known as Harry Lauders Walkingstick.

*Corylus americana*'s nuts are enjoyed by quail, deer and other wildlife as well as by humans. The bushes can be used as screens. This species is cold hardy and grows in zones 3 to 9. It will take full sun or light shade, has multiple stems and grows up to 18 feet high. Propagate by dividing clumps, or transplanting potted or balled-and-burlapped plants into well-drained soil. Keep thinned out for best appearance. Two bushes are needed for pollination.

Arbor Day Foundation currently has a project to develop a hybrid with world-wide potential. For more information on this project visit [arborday.org/hazelnuts](http://arborday.org/hazelnuts).

can only enter the openings at the bottom of the Smyrna and San Pedro figs. When the pollen is transferred the fruit becomes pollinated (for more information see [figweb.org](http://figweb.org).)

Luckily, the fig species found in the United States, *Ficus carica*, the common fig, is parthenogenic meaning it does not need fertilization, as that particular gall wasp does not live in the northern hemisphere. Several varieties of *F. carica* do well in zone 7 including 'Brown Turkey', 'Magnolia' (Brunswick), and 'Celeste', the most widely grown fig in the medium to large figs. Other good varieties are available as well. Fig trees make beautiful ornamentals, with their large, lobed leaves. They are easy to propagate from cuttings or suckers. The trees normally bear two crops, and have few pests, although you may be sharing the fruit with birds. Average soil is okay, but don't overdo the nitrogen; it will increase growth, but decrease fruiting. Figs fruit best in full sun.