



Newsletter

Preserving and Protecting the Historic Princeton Nursery Lands

It has been a very busy year. Here is what we've been up to since the Spring Newsletter...

At the **Annual Meeting** in June, we had a full-house crowd for Aura Star's wide-ranging talk on the Culture of Landscape. She provided an illustrated journey from Stonehenge through Versailles and Central Park to Princeton and Trenton, and talked about changing concepts and styles, and some of the notable architects of the world's great parks and gardens. We were delighted to see so many attendees from the Windrows at this talk!

A **Tree-Identification Walk** in August, led by Karen Linder, attracted a large, interested group — so interested that they seemed reluctant to go home at the end of the event!

The **Farm-to-Table event**, at which FPNL was feted by the Momo Brothers this year, drew about 100 attendees to Kingston's Eno Terra restaurant. FPNL trustees were able to take interested parties on a brief guided tour of the old nursery and to point out the buildings, especially the warehouses, propagation house and greenhouses — their preservation is an essential part of our core mission to preserve the history of Princeton Nurseries. FPNL is most grateful to the Momo brothers and their staff for their generous support.



National Public Lands Day, in September, saw 21 cheerfully enthusiastic volunteers weeding, picking up litter, or hacking away at brush, vines and small trees in the warehouse area — in an attempt to restore some of its lost dignity. Our heartfelt gratitude to everybody—with a special thanks to the noble lady who gave the composting toilet a thorough scrubbing! Thanks also to South Brunswick Township for hauling away the debris.



Before



After



Our fabulous volunteers take on litter and a rogue Paulownia tree



Some of our "Bushwhacking and Botany" crew

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, two major deadlines are fast approaching. When the Mapleton Preserve property was preserved, the Management and Use Agreement stipulated that the two large warehouses on the property would have to be razed if the funds and plans for their preservation weren't procured and in place in 10 years. That 10-year mark arrives in mid-December, 2015. The Mapleton Preserve Commission has been exploring pathways to an extension of this deadline with the State of New Jersey, and are also seeking permission to entertain "expressions of interest" for sustainable adaptive re-use of the warehouses. If successful, this may help to secure their future.

Below are pictures of the largest of the two warehouses. It is composed of several ~ 80 ft x ~100 ft x 13-20 ft high sections. It would be a shame to see these amazing buildings torn down.

Propagation House: The discovery of asbestos in the window glazing of the old greenhouses attached to the Propagation House brought to a screeching halt the plan to restore the Princeton Nurseries Propagation House. There is a substantial grant for the restoration project, but that money cannot be used for asbestos remediation. The inability to proceed with the project poses the danger of losing the grant. While an extension from the NJ Historical Commission was generously granted, the inability to raise the needed money for full remediation (an estimated \$450,000) again puts the grant at risk. However, if changes in the scope of the project are made so that limited remediation is done, for 1/10th of this cost, work can begin on the Propagation House. This is still a daunting figure for a small non-profit such as FPNL. The remaining remediation would still have to be done later, but the existing grant would no longer be in jeopardy.



LARGE WAREHOUSE COMPLEX from east



LARGE WAREHOUSE COMPLEX from west

Membership Renewal Appeal: To this end, **an anonymous donor has agreed to match all donations to FPNL from our 2016 renewal campaign, up to a total of \$10,000 in matching funds.** Since we solicit renewals and donations only once a year, we urge you to join or renew your membership in the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands TODAY, so that your donation can be doubled!. **Visit our website at www.fpnl.org to join or renew using either PayPal or by downloading a membership form.** Please give as generously as you can to allow us to take full advantage of this magnanimous offer.

Notes from the field - the Royal Paulownia: The Paulownia tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) is one of the trees that we removed during the National Public Lands Day cleanup. Although it has many interesting features, it is considered invasive. Once established, it is very hard to eradicate due to its rapid growth, copious seed production and strong re-sprouting ability when cut.

This native of China has dramatic heart-shaped leaves and large clusters of fragrant lavender flowers in the spring, blooming before the leaves emerge. The trees grow very rapidly (up to 15 feet tall in the first year of growth). They can reach 30 to 40 feet in height and width if given room to grow. Fuzzy, brown flower buds form in early autumn, persist over the winter, and bloom in early spring. Flowers give way to yellow-green woody seed capsules that turn brown in autumn and persist through the winter.

These nut-like capsules can contain thousands of seeds that germinate readily in the landscape. Leaves of adult trees are typically 6 to 12 inches long and 4 to 8 inches wide. However, leaves of young plants may be much larger (2-3 feet in length), giving the trees a coarse tropical look, similar to that of our native Catalpa, without the long cigar-shaped seed pods that Catalpas sport.



The fragrant purple flowers of Paulownia



Large leaves and seedpods give the Paulownia a distinctly tropical look

Paulownia belongs to the Scrophulariaceae (Figwort) family, and is also known as royal paulownia, princess tree, empress tree and foxglove tree (as foxglove is a relative). It was named after Princess Anna Paulownia, daughter of Czar Paul I of Russia. It is a revered wood in Asia, and it was once customary in Japan to plant a Paulownia tree when a baby girl was born, and then to make it into a wedding chest when she married.

The wood is nearly as light as balsa but twice as strong (30% stronger than Pine) and is very fine-grained, soft, and warp-resistant. Paulownia is used for chests, coffins, boxes, surfboards, musical instruments and clogs.

Its spread through the United States is a lesson in unintended consequences. It was imported to Europe from China in the 1830s by the Dutch East India Company and brought to North America a few years later as an ornamental plant. However, it has been hypothesized that its wide-spread naturalization in the Eastern US is due to the fact that its lightweight seedpods were commonly used as a packing material by Chinese porcelain exporters in the 19th century, before the development of Styrofoam. Packing cases would often leak in transit and scatter the seeds along rail tracks.

Still to come

Sunday, November 1, 2015 , 3 to 4 PM: Environmentalist Poetry Reading by Daniel A. Harris



Formerly an author of literary critical studies and a teacher of 19th and 20th century poetry, Daniel Harris turned to writing his own poems upon retirement. He is also an active environmentalist and has focused on both local and regional land-use issues and sustainable urban planning. The reading will take place in the Education Building, Mapleton Preserve/D&R Canal State Park Headquarters, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston. **For more information, please call 609-683-0483 or visit <http://www.danielharrispoet.net/>.** The event is free and light refreshments will be served.

Thursday, November 26. 10-11:30 am - Thanksgiving Day Walk:

Join FPNL president Karen Linder for a Thanksgiving Day morning exploration of the Mapleton Preserve. This 10 am program will begin at the Main Office for the D&R Canal State Park, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston. Come work off some Thanksgiving day calories, search for wildlife and enjoy the abundance and subtle beauty of late fall. **Open to all, but preregistration IS requested. Call 609-683-0483 to reserve a spot.**



Wild turkey - photo courtesy of Gary D. Tonhouse

Sunday, Dec. 14th, Audubon Christmas Bird Count

(BIRDERS TAKE NOTE!) Starts at 7:30 AM:

The Kingston segment of this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Kingston Greenways Association, begins at 7:30 AM to catch the "early birds". We will bird until noon, when we take a break for lunch at Main Street Café. The group then continues with the count in the afternoon. You can join us for morning, afternoon, or both. If interested, give Karen Linder a call (609-683-0483) for more info. We would particularly appreciate the help of experienced birders for this event, but novices are also welcome.

Friday, JANUARY 1, 2016, Noon - 2: First Day Hike:

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands invites everyone to a First Day Hike in the Mapleton Preserve on Friday, January 1, 2016, at noon. For anyone who made a resolution to walk more, this is a great opportunity to start the new year off with an easy 1.5 mile loop hike through the Mapleton Preserve, into the fields on the other side of Mapleton Road, along the D&R Canal and back to the Preserve. Last year we had 123 people for this event - let's see if we can break that record!

We know you will want to sleep in a little, so the walk will not start until noon. It will begin and end at the Mapleton Preserve/D&R Canal State Park Headquarters at 145 Mapleton Road in Kingston. Dress for the weather. The walk is free and all are welcome. For more information, visit www.fpnl.org as we get closer to the new year.

Monday, January 18th, 2016, Noon to 3 pm - Martin Luther King Day of Service work session in the

Mapleton Preserve: We will be clearing small trees, brush, vines, and trash. Come spend a winter afternoon outdoors with us, and discover the special joys of stewardship! Bring saws, clippers, loppers and rakes. Work gloves, sturdy shoes, warm clothing and hats are a must. All are welcome. Call 609-683-0483 for more information, or if you would like to involve a group to help.

Stay up to date. For more information see: www.fpnl.org