

Science Education

TREE-mendous things afoot at Farmpark

BY SKIP DUGAN, HORTICULTURAL & MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS MANAGER

VALERIE REINHARDT, HORTICULTURE EDUCATION SPECIALIST

*“I think that I shall never see
a poem as lovely as a tree”*

Joyce Kilmer

These words echo in our thoughts whenever we hike up the “crabby” hill to the Plant Science Center (PSC). That is because Farmpark’s Horticulture Department was busy this spring and the road is now flanked with different varieties of crab apples that promise to put on a magnificent show next year. When you reach the PSC you will be amazed at the changes there too. Just south of the PSC we’ve rearranged the small fruit plantings and planted a new apple orchard of 52 apple trees consisting of four varieties.

So why are we doing this now you might ask? The trees were started four years ago when our grower, Mary Peders, attended an Ohio Fruit Growers meeting and obtained a 100 tree donation from a Pennsylvania nursery. Subsequently, various Lake County nurseries also donated 100 crabapples.

Well, we weren’t ready to plant them right away, so we lined them out in our Farmpark nursery, watered and fertilized them, staked them up and voila, this spring we had lots of trees ready to go, we mean bursting out, 2-inch caliper, nice branching tops starting to grow into each other. It was time to think about where to put them and the area in front of the PSC was just crying to be crowned with their flowering glory, making a nice transition to the apiary and compost displays to boot.

Also, you may or may not know that an insect pest is approaching Lake County and will likely decimate all of the ash trees. This is especially unfortunate for Farmpark, as the main entrance



and other roadways are lined with ash trees. What should we do? Interplant with other species NOW so when the pest most certainly comes, we have mature trees in place.

Last year we purchased 25 nice 1-gallon elm whips from a local nursery. These aren’t just any elms, they’re “Valley Forge” elms, the classic vase-shaped American elms of yesteryear with one major difference—they’re highly resistant to Dutch elm disease. We potted them in 3-gallon pots and grew them on, adding lots more size and roots. Another Lake County nursery made us a 2-for-1 deal on 54 oaks, lindens and Norway Maples.

Planting all these trees takes a bit of work and it made sense to go to town and plant everything at once. We rented a tree spade and began transforming the PSC hill top into a brand new area in just four days. With another couple days trenching in drip lines to ensure these new trees a great start, we’re now ready to add some pathways and make visiting the PSC a tree-riffic experience.

Our tree planting mania didn’t stop there. We then interplanted all those elms along the main entrance. This explains why you can see a large ash tree (as good as dead) and a small tree growing next to it. We also made homes for oaks, lindens and maples, beside every other ash tree along the Dairy roadway as well as adding trees at Showman’s Circle and in the Barnyard.

The rewards may not be apparent yet, but in a few short years we will reap the benefits of this spring’s labor with plentiful shade to enjoy on a summer’s day. Added to this will be the delights of the flowering trees in spring and autumn colors in the fall making visiting Farmpark tree-mendous.