Even though the Board of Directors of the Friends of Buttonwood Park has been unable to meet in person, we have held our Board meetings over Zoom each month. Our work has been continuing since our Tree Committee and our volunteers have been able to weed, prune, mulch and plant because the outdoors is a safe place despite the pandemic.

The water treatment plan started last year on the pond has continued this year, but it has gotten off to a late start. Due to the nutrient load, the Microbe Lift® treatment could be valuable at preventing algae blooms. The aerator in the pond is different than the one last year because of the low water level in the pond. It may be taken out if the water level gets any lower. The aerator is maintained and installed by Alan and Cynthia Days who operate the swan boats on the pond.

The City received a proposal from the USDA to manage the geese in five city parks and the golf course with Mass. Wildlife. It was submitted for the FY21 budget, but it did not pass. this is unfortunate, since the geese our the largest polluters of the pond. The city did vote three million for the dam project in last years budget, but presently the project is held up in the Environmental Committee. Due to COVID-19 the city’s budget is strained and monies must go to unexpected expenses. The Friends have been trying to get the city to remove some of the dead trees in the park for the last two years; particularly trees overhanging walking paths and trees that are eyesores near the pond.


Remembering Two Dear Friends in a Time of Crisis …

This year, a number of eagerly anticipated special events have been cancelled in Buttonwood Park. These large gatherings are meant to reconnect us with old friends, former colleagues, and facilitate the forging of new friendships in our community. With social distancing now a necessary precaution for our health, the importance of green spaces for our physical and mental well-being has never been greater.

We highlight the legacies of Ann and Fred Beaumont, a special couple whose contributions, together with our many Friends and supporters over 30 years, have made Buttonwood Park a safe and welcome refuge during these unprecedented times.

Fred Beaumont passed away in April after a period of declining health. A veteran of WWII, he was a successful businessman and an avid builder of beautiful ship models. He was Treasurer of the Friends for many years and worked on several ‘March for Parks’ events in the 1990s.

Although Fred had a calm, unassuming manner, he was a strong, effective advocate for Buttonwood Park. Concerned about the safety of park goers, he persuaded the Park Board to install speed tables on Fuller Parkway which bisects Buttonwood Park. After his departure from the Friends Board of Directors, Fred was made a lifetime honorary member.

Ann Beaumont’s involvement with the Friends began in the late 1980s. She was a persuasive visionary who could nudge you beyond your perceived capabilities. (It was impossible to deny her anything.) A talented artist, she helped design the wayside sign at the entrance to the Arboretum. She was passionate about the variety of trees in the park and, most likely, could identify each one by leaf, fruit, and bark. In 2008, she was named ‘Mother Earth’ at New Bedford’s Earth Day celebration.

Ann’s enthusiasm for passing along her knowledge and love of nature to a younger generation stemmed from a childhood memory of a Sassafras tree. It led to her co-founding the Friends’ Tree Identification Program serving area schoolchildren. She became one of its first Tree Guides.

Ann never lost her fighting spirit. Despite a series of health issues in later years, she continued to inspire and educate all of us on the importance of maintaining Buttonwood Park’s trees and numerous gardens.

On a sun-filled day in the summer of 2013, family honored her memory with a public ‘Celebration of Life’ service held under a canopy of trees in the park. It was a fitting tribute!

Lydia King

Volunteers Always Wanted

We can use volunteers for weeding, tree watering, and general clean up. If you are interested, please visit our website listed on page 4 and select “CONTACT”. Leave your information there and hit the green “SEND” button.
The Dawn Redwood - a Most Unusual Tree

Located in the Arboretum just south of Fuller Memorial Parkway (Court Street), the Dawn Redwood is a most unusual tree. On the Arboretum Key, which can be found on the northern end of the Concourse opposite the greenhouse, it is tree number 7. Our specimen was planted in 2015.

The Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides) was once one of the most widespread tree species in the Northern Hemisphere (during the Tertiary period, 66 million to 2.6 million years ago). Scientists had identified fossil remains of this redwood in North America, Asia and Greenland and had concluded that it must have been extinct for millions of years. However, in 1944, a Chinese forester found an enormous dawn redwood in the Sichuan province of China. In 1948, a small group traveled to south-central China and found a few thousand of the trees growing in lowland canyons.

In 1947 Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum sent another expedition to China to collect seed from these newly discovered redwoods. Despite a government ban, scientists accompanied by armed guards collected four pounds of seed and sent them to Boston. By 1948 this seed was being distributed to botanic gardens and universities across the world, most certainly saving the Dawn Redwood from extinction. Now, 60-plus years later, the beautiful Dawn Redwood is a popular landscape tree here and abroad.

Dawn redwoods’ colorful leaves are one trait that separates this species from its family members. The only living species in its genus, the dawn redwood is a deciduous tree rather than an evergreen. But its leaves appear to look more like evergreen needles. Dawn redwoods typically grow between 50 to 60 feet in height and are considered a fast growing tree. Today dawn redwoods can be found in China, Japan, and the United States in botanical gardens. The Crescent Ridge Dawn Redwoods Preserve in North Carolina has 200 dawn redwoods.
Richard Leary, our president, can often be seen riding his bicycle around the park.

As the Friends nears 31 years of service, the park remains for us an exciting place of potential and challenge. We continue our work on the development of the area north of the pond – the ongoing North Trails Project – which will create a wonderful new recreational space; great possibilities exist for the southwestern corner of the park as an accessible naturalistic woodland; functional and aesthetic improvements will greatly enhance the restored tennis courts complex. Significant issues include the continuing loss of pond area to expanding sediment fill and water quality deterioration; the expanding goose population; plant and animal invasives, in particular disease-carrying ticks. Doing new projects and addressing problems present both technical and funding challenges. Finding funding, a problem in normal times, will be that much harder because of the economic impact of Covid-19.

The Friends stands poised to move forward creatively and aggressively on these various fronts. We also hope to significantly increase our membership and find new funding sources. Our efforts will be aided by a number of talented and enthusiastic young people who have joined our board as well as a number of excellent additions to the volunteer ranks. Despite the pandemic, we continue our active engagement as stewards of the park and we are most grateful to our members for their continuing interest and support.

Our latest memorial tree was planted this summer near the pond north of the Senior Center. It is a Magnolia x loebneri “Merrill”. Its large star-like white flowers have a pleasing light fragrance. If you are interested in purchasing a memorial tree in memory of a loved one, visit our web page where you may order a tree or contact us for more information through our web page. The cost is $300. A plaque with the name of your loved one will be placed in the Lawler Library at the park.