

The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum: a Celebration

arboretum

ar-bo-re-tum

noun

- a large garden where an extensive variety of trees are grown for scientific and educational purposes.
- a botanical garden specializing in trees or woody plants.
 - a museum for trees.
 - a place where trees and shrubs are cultivated for exhibition.
 - trees that are grown with a purpose.
 - a public garden.
 - an urban forest.



Message from the President

The rural cemetery movement of the mid-1800's envisioned cemeteries as civic institutions designed for public use that contain images of hope and immortality. The Kensico Cemetery's founders selected the cemetery grounds in Westchester for its natural beauty and dramatic contours with these goals in mind, incorporating it as a rural cemetery in 1889.

In the many decades that followed, a consistent focus on and attention to the enrichment of the landscape through the curation, maintenance, and cultivation of thousands of trees and plantings that grace the land have resulted in a vista that appropriately honors those who are memorialized at Kensico. These constant and thoughtful efforts, and the resultant public garden, have now been recognized in the most appropriate way: Kensico's accreditation as a Level II Arboretum. This certification marks the next natural step and a significant milestone in the evolution of the grounds.

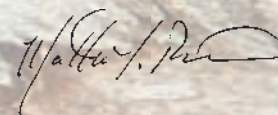
As of 2023, the Kensico Cemetery Arboretum is the sole arboretum in Westchester County with a Level II designation and one of only three certified arboreta in the county. Level II status was awarded by the accrediting body ArbNet and underscores the efforts invested in expanding Kensico's collection of trees and woody plants for more than century. This collection of 101 distinct certified specimens includes a remarkable assortment of trees from all over the world.

The current Board of Directors and the employees of The Kensico Cemetery recognize that we are temporary shepherds of these lands. We are honored to be a part of Kensico's commitment to maintain and enhance the beauty of the grounds in perpetuity as a tribute to nature, history, and community.

It is fitting that Kensico's 2023 Annual Report celebrates this significant accomplishment and features photographs that depict some of the

beauty that is experienced when on the cemetery grounds.

I invite you to join in the celebration of the Kensico Cemetery Arboretum's Level II designation. First, please enjoy the pages that follow — images and messages that reflect the incredible natural beauty that has been nurtured on these grounds; then, go online to the Morton Register of Arboreta (<https://arbnet.org/morton-register/state>) to understand where this accreditation places Kensico in the ranks of arboreta worldwide; finally, please come visit the Kensico Cemetery Arboretum and experience for yourself this magnificent collection of trees that celebrates life in the rural cemetery tradition.



Matthew G. Parisi
President



Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Backdrop

Upright monuments and mausoleums often have little landscapes of their own, small embellishments in and around the stonework. But the trees — particularly the older, taller, fuller specimens — provide an added scenic backdrop, enhancing the visual impact of the artfully designed memorials.



"Nature originally gave Kensico Cemetery an exquisite endowment of beauty. The landscape artist has supplemented nature's work. Drives, lakes, fountains, groves and walks have been laid out and arranged with the design of giving it a park-like aspect."

1898 Annual Report to Lot Proprietors





Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

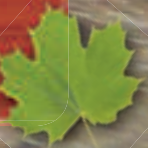
as a Backdrop continued

Blooms, blossoms, branches, leaves, and bark supply color and texture throughout the seasons, and like the set for a Broadway play, the trees and woody plants create the perfect artistic background for acts of remembrance.





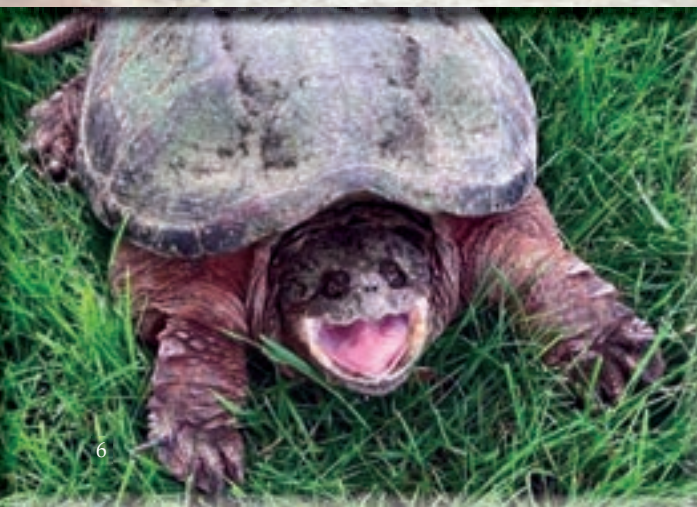
Roots: Forming an imposing backdrop, the tallest trees on the Kensico grounds--- typically oaks, maples, and evergreens--- can reach over one hundred feet in height. As a comparison, the Kensico Tower is ninety-eight feet high, and the tallest monument--- the obelisk at the Actors Fund--- is fifty-two feet, eight inches.



Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

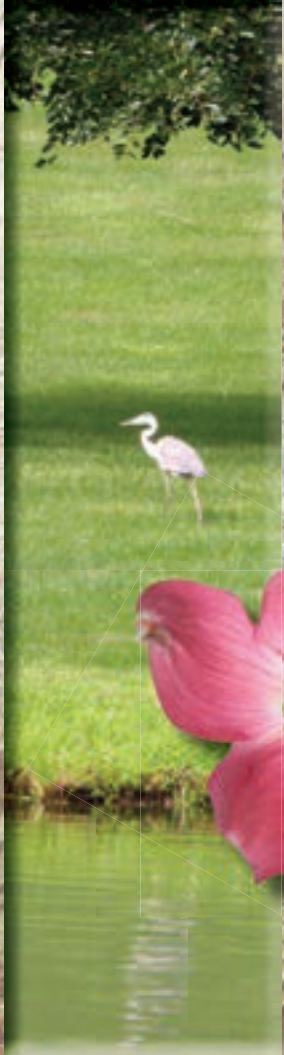
as a Habitat

While the arboretum serves as an artistic backdrop to the memorials at Kensico, it also creates a safe haven for many living creatures. Trees, woody plants, and shrubs are home, food, shelter, and shade for desirable wildlife. The red-tailed hawk that perches above in high branches, the visiting heron, the curious deer, the endangered Monarch butterflies that stop at our waystation, the Eastern bluebirds that return to nestboxes stationed throughout our grounds, the bees busy producing honey by our woodlands — even Kenny our resident snapping turtle — all find refuge and sustenance among the foliage and within Kensico's memorials and monuments. We welcome them.



"The significance of trees and shrubs lies not just in their beauty but in the myriad ways they foster and sustain a diverse array of life forms, creating habitats for humans and wildlife and providing resources that are extremely important for the health and resilience of ecosystems. Wildlife use trees and shrubs for nesting, food sources, and refuge from predators. Trees act as a carbon sink, sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in their biomass and soil. And the shade they provide to all of us, including wildlife, is priceless on a hot sunny day."

*Michael H. Cook, Jr., ISA;
Vice President; Superintendent*



Roots: Mineola Lake, fed by the Bronx River, appears on the oldest maps of the Cemetery and has become a favored destination for visiting fowl at Kensico for 134 years.

Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Sentinel

Throughout the decades and into the future, Kensico's trees are living witnesses to the rich history of the grounds and the individuals memorialized there. As Kensico grew and developed, so did the trees. As Kensico survived snowstorms and hurricanes, likewise, the trees remained steady sentinels.



"No other person, object, building, or living thing has shared as much history with us as the trees of Kensico. Flowering, deciduous, or evergreen, they command the landscape, define our borders, and give character to each section of the cemetery in every season."

A 2014 tabletop calendar celebrating the 125th anniversary of Kensico Cemetery.





Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Sentinel continued

Whether as guards at attention, as placeholders in winter to remind us of life's seasonal cycle, or as lines of demarcation from one section of the Cemetery to another, the Kensico trees watch over these grounds as steady guardians through the passage of time.





***Roots:** It's not unusual to find trees on the Kensico grounds that are over one hundred years old. Specimens of Yellow Cucumber, Sugar Maple, White Oak, and American Sycamore, planted on or before 1900, began their first chapter with us in January, 1889, the year of Kensico's incorporation.*



Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Classroom

In the 134 years of Kensico's history, there have been countless trees planted, some trees lost to disease or damage, many replaced, and others chosen for their special qualities: trees that thrive with water nearby; species accustomed to a proximity to traffic; trees that bend naturally when high winds occur; trees from China, Japan, India, and other distant locations that introduce new colors and textures. And when needed, Kensico assists in the natural development and preservation of this urban forest as we learn from and pass along our experience with this magnificent horticultural laboratory.



"It's a lifelong learning curve as you navigate all the variables: you conduct research, get input from local nurseries and guidance from the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone updates, demonstrate appreciation for the history of the land itself, minimize invasive plants, respect the value of open spaces and, wherever possible, emulate the original landscaping concepts described in historical documents. It's ultimately a balance: the right tree for the right place."

*Herb Landmann,
Project Manager, Davey Business Development Team*





Roots: *The tall sycamore trees that line both sides of Seneca Avenue remain one of the last monocultures on the Kensico Cemetery property. We have learned over the years that a large collection of a single species of any plant makes that area vulnerable to disease. Now, species are combined throughout the grounds as re-plantings and replacements are necessary and developed areas are landscaped.*

Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Collection

The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum's expansive collection of 101 different species of trees (with many more to join the inventory) provides limitless inspiration for the creation of themed sections throughout the Cemetery.

Drive alongside Cohasset, around Minnewaska, or up and over Dacotah and notice a particular character to the area... a focus on soft evergreens, an explosion of flowering branches, a nod to Asian influences.



"We protect these gifts of nature as we would any precious asset—by safeguarding them against loss now and in the future through diversification, vigilant maintenance, and a clear vision of Kensico as a rural cemetery."

*Chester S. Day, former President;
retired Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kensico Cemetery.*



List of the 101 Different Species of Trees and Woody Plants in the Arboretum Collection:

Alaska Cedar 🌿 American Beech 🌿 American Dogwood 🌿 American Holly 🌿 American Smoketree
 American Sycamore 🌿 Amur Maackia 🌿 Amur Maple 🌿 Asian White Birch 🌿 Beaked Stewartia
 Black Cherry 🌿 Black Tupelo 🌿 Black Walnut 🌿 Bottlebrush Buckeye 🌿 Chestnut Oak 🌿 Chinese Elm
 Chinese Fringe Tree 🌿 Chinese Juniper 🌿 Colorado Blue Spruce 🌿 Common Baldcypress 🌿 Common Winterberry
 Corkscrew Willow 🌿 Corneliancherry Dogwood 🌿 Crimson King Norway Maple 🌿 Crimson Spire Oak
 Cutleaf Stephanandra 🌿 Cutleaf Weeping Japanese Maple 🌿 Dawn Redwood 🌿 Douglas Fir 🌿 Dusty Zenobia
 Eastern Cottonwood 🌿 Eastern Hemlock 🌿 Eastern Redbud 🌿 Eastern White Pine 🌿 European Beech
 Franklin Tree 🌿 Ginkgo 🌿 Goldenrain Tree 🌿 Green Giant Arborvitae 🌿 Green Hawthorn 🌿 Hollywood Juniper
 Honeylocust 🌿 Horsechestnut 🌿 Igiri Tree 🌿 Inkberry 🌿 Japanese Gray Birch 🌿 Japanese Maple
 Japanese Pagoda Tree 🌿 Japanese Plum Yew 🌿 Japanese Red Cedar 🌿 Japanese Red Pine 🌿 Japanese Snowbell
 Japanese Stewartia 🌿 Japanese Zelkova 🌿 Kentucky Coffeetree 🌿 Kousa Dogwood 🌿 Kwanzan Cherry
 Longstalk Holly 🌿 Northern Catalpa 🌿 Northern Hackberry 🌿 Northern Red Oak 🌿 Norway Maple 🌿 Norway Spruce
 Oriental Spruce 🌿 Paperbark Maple 🌿 Persian Parrotia 🌿 Pin Oak 🌿 Pussy Willow 🌿 Red Maple
 River Birch 🌿 Sargent's Weeping Hemlock 🌿 Sawtooth Oak 🌿 Scotch Pine
 Seven-Son Flower 🌿 Shadbush 🌿 Shagbark Hickory
 Shawnee Brave Baldcypress 🌿 Siberian Cypress 🌿 Silver Maple 🌿 Sourwood
 Southern Magnolia 🌿 Sterling Silver Linden 🌿 Sugar Maple
 Swamp White Oak 🌿 Sweetbay Magnolia 🌿 Sweetgum
 Taylor Eastern Red Cedar 🌿 Tea Crabapple 🌿 Three-Flower Maple 🌿 Tuliptree
 Upright English Oak 🌿 Valley Forge Elm 🌿 Weeping Cherry
 Weeping Katsuratree 🌿 Weeping Mulberry 🌿 Weeping White Pine
 Weeping Willow 🌿 White Enkianthus 🌿 White Oak 🌿 Yellow Cucumber Tree

Roots: After World War II affordable and attractive 1-4 grave lots with flush markers in landscaped lawns with specific tree identities (Garden of the Apostles, Garden of the Maples, Kensico Gardens, and Tower Gardens) were offered for the first time. This memorial park concept became a signature feature of future development of the Cemetery.



Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

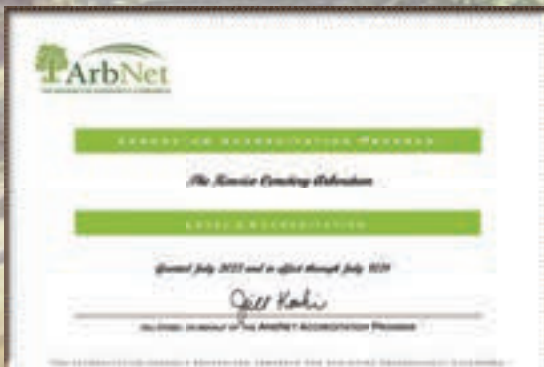
as a Designation

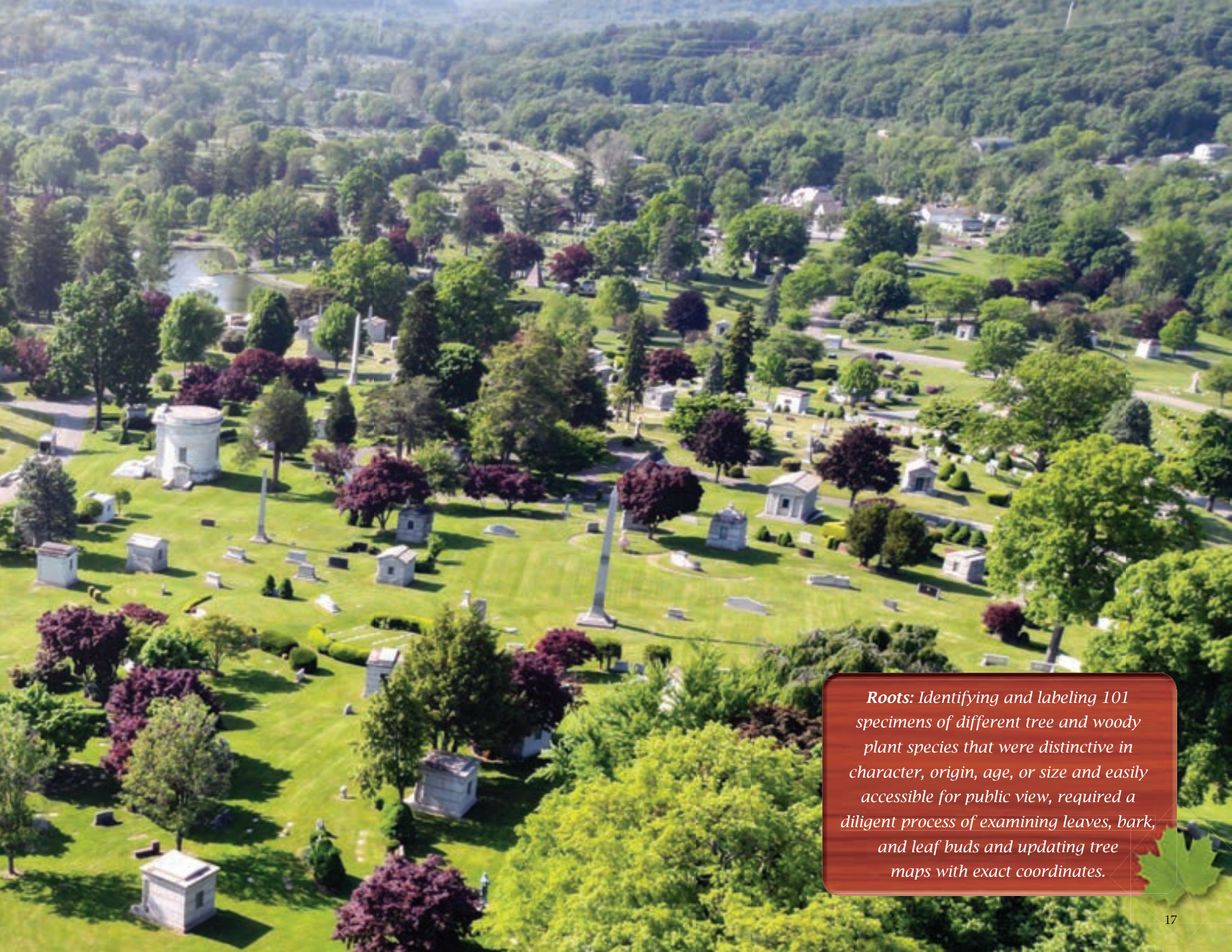
Kensico Cemetery does not have an arboretum — it IS an arboretum. All 460 acres of developed and undeveloped land, including the 52 acres in Sharon Gardens, form the newly designated Level II Kensico Cemetery Arboretum, an accreditation granted by ArbNet/Morton Register in September 2023.

Kensico Cemetery is now the only cemetery in Westchester County with Level II arboretum status, one of only three cemeteries in New York State, and one of only twelve organizations in New York State with Level II arboretum status.

“Congratulations on achieving an upgrade in your Arboretum Accreditation from Level I to Level II for The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum. This ongoing recognition of professional standards and capabilities bears significance for your organization and for tree-focused public gardens. As part of the Morton Register of Arboreta, you have an important role in our shared purpose to plant and conserve trees, and accreditation in this work acknowledges your commitment to and fulfillment of professional criteria.”

*Jill Koski,
President and CEO, The Morton Arboretum/ArbNet*





***Roots:** Identifying and labeling 101 specimens of different tree and woody plant species that were distinctive in character, origin, age, or size and easily accessible for public view, required a diligent process of examining leaves, bark, and leaf buds and updating tree maps with exact coordinates.*

Celebrating The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum

as a Throughline

The care of trees and the recognition of them as pivotal in creating a pastoral landscape has always been a part of the planning and management of the Kensico Cemetery grounds. It's a throughline that dates back to the rural cemetery movement in the late 1800's when cemeteries were developed in the American suburbs, taking advantage of land that was naturally picturesque, and advancing the concept that cemeteries are for the living as well as for the dead. Kensico Cemetery was part of that

movement in 1889, incorporating as a rural cemetery and committing to the beautification of the grounds.

The Kensico Cemetery Arboretum designation stands as a natural extension of that rural cemetery movement in its mission and its commitment to the land as a source of solace and a landscape for remembrance. The throughline continues into the horizon as a principle and guiding mission — unwavering, focused, and forever.



"In the past 134 years, not only have thousands and thousands of trees been planted, but special tree beautification and maintenance programs have been established as part of Kensico's annual budget. I invite you to tour the Cemetery in person, driving, or walking the sixteen miles of internal roads, or virtually, and take notice of the various species of trees and features throughout the grounds. After doing so, I'm sure that you will agree with me when I say: "We are and always will be a Cemetery representing the lot owners past... present...and future...maintaining...planning...and creating an attractive and comfortable environment in order to pay tribute and honor to all those buried at Kensico Cemetery and Sharon Gardens."

Chester S. Day, former President and retired Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kensico Cemetery





Roots: *Seventy years of professional horticultural expertise from (in chronological order) Kensico Cemetery Board Members Howard Taylor, C. Powers Taylor, and Richard Schnall laid the groundwork for and has resulted in ongoing and consistent guidance in the selection, care, and, when necessary, the replacement of trees, shrubs, and plantings on the grounds.*



Officers

*President, Chief Executive Officer,
and Counsel*
Matthew G. Parisi

Vice President and Superintendent
Michael H. Cook, Jr.

*Vice President, Chief Financial Officer,
and Treasurer*
Theresa M. Doran

*Vice President, and Sales and
Development Manager*
Michael J. Farmer

Board of Directors

Secretary
Mary Ann Alonso

Kevin J. Bannon

Catherine U. Biddle

Raymond Lou

Matthew G. Parisi

Elizabeth Payne

Chairman
Raymond M. Planell

Vice Chairman
Richard A. Schnall

Howard Weintraub

Superintendents

Superintendent
Michael H. Cook, Jr.

Deputy Superintendents
Jack Cunha
Joaquim Pedrosa

Assistant Superintendents
Carlos Lopes
Joe Sabio



Thank You

Many people gave their time and shared their expertise with us during the preparation of this publication. We thank them for their invaluable contributions:

Data

Kathy Cauci,
Customer Service Representative; Kensico Cemetery
Stephanie Chan,
*Senior Customer Service Representative;
Kensico Cemetery*
Andrea Gallagher,
Executive Administrative Assistant; Kensico Cemetery

Historical Background

Chester S. Day,
*former President; retired Chairman of the Board
of Directors; Kensico Cemetery*
Lawrence Massaro,
*former Vice President and Superintendent;
Kensico Cemetery*

Horticulture

Michael H. Cook, Jr. ISA;
*Vice President and Superintendent;
Kensico Cemetery*
Herb Landmann, ISA;
Project Manager; Davey Business Development Team
Richard Schnall,
Board of Directors; Kensico Cemetery

Photography

Natalie Craig,
Communications Coordinator; Kensico Cemetery
Kenneth Gabrielsen
Richard Lawrence; *Direct2Marketing*





The Kensico Cemetery
273 Lakeview Avenue, P.O. Box 7, Valhalla, NY 10595
1-888-KENSICO 1-888-536-7426 Fax: 914-949-0803
www.kensico.org www.sharongardens.org e-mail: kensico@kensico.org