

TREE TIME

THE NEWSLETTER OF MOUNT PISGAH ARBORETUM

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A Commitment to the Land: Welcoming our New Operations Director

Winter is a season of rest, reflection, and planning. While the trees of the Arboretum appear dormant above ground during the colder months, much is still happening beneath the surface as roots maintain themselves, store energy, and prepare for the Spring growth. Likewise, the Arboretum is using the Winter season to thoughtfully strengthen our internal operations, ensuring we are well rooted the for seasons ahead.

As Mount Pisgah Arboretum grows in both scope and impact, the importance of a strong, supportive organizational foundation has become increasingly clear. From environmental education and land stewardship to community events, partnerships, and daily visitor experience, the work that happens here depends on thoughtful coordination and care behind the scenes. Strengthening our internal capacity is essential to sustaining this work and ensuring that the Arboretum remains accessible and resilient for generations to come.

The need for an Operations Director emerged over the last few years. In that time, we have determined the most supportive and sustainable path forward for this position. We are guided by a desire to grow in a way that supports staff and enhances people's experience of the Arboretum.

With that in mind, I am excited to share that we are welcoming the Arboretum's current Facilities Manager, Connor Reinecke, into the role of Operations Director. In his five years at the Arboretum, Connor has gained a wealth of institutional knowledge, proven his leadership, and demonstrated a deep commitment to this place and community. We are confident that this transition will strengthen the organization as a whole.

In his new role, Connor will oversee and support our site, education, and venue rental operations. This shift allows me, as Executive Director, to direct more of my focus to development, building relationships with our membership, and the long-term financial viability of the organization.



Arboretum Directors:
Connor Reinecke & Ilana Jakubowski
Photo by Jade Pfaefflin Bounds

A Commitment to the Land: Welcoming our New Operations Director (Cont.)

We are genuinely excited about how this staffing restructuring positions Mount Pisgah Arboretum for continued stewardship, connection, and community impact in the years to come.

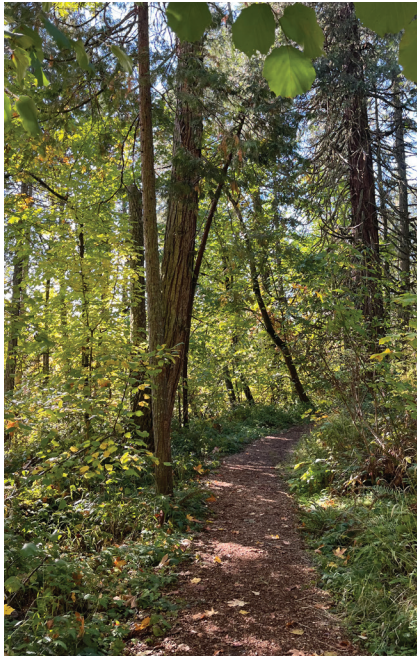
By Ilana Jakubowski

Another Stride for Accessibility: New Infrastructure

The last few years have marked major strides for accessibility and inclusion in the Arboretum, from major trail improvements, partnerships with other community groups, expanding Spanish language programming, and hosting all-terrain track chairs through David's Chair. The next big step has come in our work to build a more accessible and welcoming Arboretum: new kiosks and updated wayfinding posts.

Our current kiosks were installed about 35 years ago and, while they served us well, many of them present an accessibility challenge as some locations are difficult to access or read for wheelchair users, others with mobility limitations, and across the height spectrum. Our wayfinding posts were installed about 15 years ago and our trails have changed since then, prompting the need for updates that reflect our current network of trails and our accessible loops.

In 2025, we were awarded a grant by Travel Oregon to build new kiosks, update and expand our wayfinding posts, and design and install a new monument sign, all in service of creating a more accessible Arboretum! We've been hard at work, designing the new installations and sourcing community input. The materials will be installed this coming Fall.



The new kiosks will be designed so the information is easy for people of different ages and physical abilities to access, and to shelter from the rain when needed. The new permanent information they offer will help visitors learn about the Arboretum and all there is to experience with full Spanish translations, audio descriptions, and thoughtful inclusions of Chinuk Wawa and Kalupuya languages, thanks to generous support and collaboration from Lane Community College's Chinuk Wawa faculty.

The new wayfinding posts will provide clarity at additional trail intersections, clearly identify accessible routes, and provide easy access to trail maps.

We are grateful to Travel Oregon for this opportunity to reflect the needs and diversity of our community in the infrastructure on site, and create ease for all Arboretum visitors for years to come.

By Jade Pfaefflin Bounds

Photo by Jade Pfaefflin Bounds

Land Acknowledgment

Mount Pisgah Arboretum is located on the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya people. The Kalapuya people were forcibly dispossessed of their homeland and moved to reservations in western Oregon by the United States government following treaties in the 1850's. Today the Kalapuya people are largely citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. We acknowledge that the Arboretum is on occupied lands, and express our respect for the Kalapuya. We humbly honor their past, present, and future, and are committed to finding meaningful ways to recognize their enduring legacy in the region.

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About

Mount Pisgah Arboretum is a nonprofit organization with a mission to engage people with nature through interactive learning and stewardship.

The White Oak Pavilion: Booking 2026 & 2027

Getting married, hosting a party, or looking for a retreat space in 2026 or 2027? Dates are filling up fast to book our White Oak Pavilion, so reach out now to reserve your perfect date in this unforgettable venue.



To book, learn more, or schedule a tour. Reach out to our Venue Manager:

Tawnia Ross
events@
mountpishgaharobretum.org
(541) 747-1504

*Photos by Ronny & Rene Designs
& Among the Oaks Photography*

Arboretum Champion: Mike Smith

Arboretum volunteer and donor Mike Smith moved to Oregon in 2013 after 37 years in Arizona. He started volunteering at the Arboretum after the devastating 2024 ice storm. Mike liked it here and began regularly attending our Saturday volunteer work parties. These days, he can still be found here on many Saturdays, as well as working hard at our Festivals.



During a recent illness, Mike found both the people and the land a friendly spot when he needed one. So as things became more difficult in our Country, he decided to invest more in the Arboretum by becoming a donor as a way to ensure that what he cared about stayed strong through the turbulence. In Mike's words, "The Arboretum exists because of its excellent staff. We want them to stay, we want them to thrive, we want new ideas, perhaps more staff, perhaps more programs, good equipment, festivals, and to be able to maintain everything...and it costs. It's worth it."

Mike is an eight year volunteer with 4000 hours for the Scorpion trail crew working year round in the Cascades. He also adopts a winter snowshoe trail, is active in the Obsidians, and a former volunteer of six years in the math lab at LCC. When not outdoors getting dirty, he can be found writing about many sorts of outdoor topics. His writings are featured in the Obsidian Bulletin, Cascade Volunteers, Friends of the Boundary Waters, and at a local health center. He lives with his wife Jan, and several indoor cats.

By Mike Smith, Arboretum Volunteer

Photo by Mike Smith

Excecuting our Strategic Plan: 2025 Progress

Last year, we unveiled our 2025-2030 strategic plan. Each of the five years, we identify strategic actions that will tangibly advance each goal in the strategic plan. You can read about all the actions we took in 2025 on our website, here are some highlights:

Goal #1: Increase Operational Capacity & Investments in Staff.

- Expanded staff benefits, policies, & resources
- Transitioned communications systems

Goal #2: Deepen our Engagement with Diverse Populations.

- Identified and connected with new community partner orgs
- Collaborated on a grant and walks with NAACP
- Expanded accessibility programs

Goal #3: Strengthen our Collaboration with Regional Environmental Stewards

- Deepened our involvement with Upper Wilamette Stewardship Network
- Collaborated with Beyond Toxics on a series of nature walks

Goal #4: Provide Equitable Access to Programs & Resources.

- Explored community transportation options
- Improved equity of hiring and board recruitment processes

Goal #5: Increase Funding & Broaden Diversity of Funding Sources.

- Expanded memorial giving opportunities
- Improved equitable board recruitment process

Goal #6: Develop Facilities that Enhance the Visitor Experience.

- Developed evacuation procedures
- Received Travel Oregon grant for new kiosks, wayfinding posts, and monument sign

Goal #7: Enhance our Stewardship of the Natural Environment

- Removed invasive Malta star thistle
- Continued fuel reduction work
- Purchased new mower

Let's Talk Trees!

This Fall kicked off the start of our Tree Inventory Project, an undertaking to gather thorough baseline data on the trees that make up the Arboretum. The data collected will guide future habitat management and allow us to reliably and accurately track changes in response to environmental pressures. After extensive consideration and planning, we began work with help from the Oregon Department of Forestry who provided use of their TreePlotter software to document our findings and funding through the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District.



Phase one of the Tree Inventory Project is data collection focused on the Arboretum's Oregon ash trees (*Fraxinus latifolia*). We are aiming to inventory at least 90% of ash trees on site that are above four inches in diameter around "chest height", or about four and a half feet. This point is also known as "diameter at breast height" or DBH. We are documenting DBH, height, species, and location, as well as conducting a quick health assessment on each tree.

Data and documentation that paint an accurate picture of our Oregon ash population will be essential in the years to come. As we adapt to changing environmental conditions and prepare for the arrival of the emerald ash borer. The emerald ash borer is an invasive beetle that infests and kills ash trees which has been found in Oregon and is anticipated to reach Eugene in the next ten years. Having accurate, comprehensive data on the Arboretum's tree population will be essential to habitat management planning for healthy tree populations and preparation for increased woody fuels on site.

Phase two of the project is identifying legacy trees within the Arboretum. Legacy trees are native species of substantial size that, due to their key locations, are contributing significantly to the ecosystem and feature unique characteristics. The "ocotopus" tree on the Incense-Cedar Trail is a perfect example as an old, recognizable tree that provides essential habitat. Identifying these trees will help us create a management plan that reflects their needs, whether they need encroaching vegetation removed, pruning, or fertilization.



We are excited to see the Tree Inventory come together. The data found and tracked through this project will guide land stewardship in the Arboretum through challenges in the coming years.

By Patrick Wegner, Habitat & Trails Manager

Photos by August Jackson



Upcoming Events

Winter Twig Tour
Saturday, February 21st
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Water Garden Trail Resurfacing Work Party
Sunday, February 22nd
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

March Bird Tour
Sunday, March 8th
See calendar for times

Nature Guide Orientation
Tuesday, March 10th
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Daffodil Dig Up Work Party
Saturday, March 14th
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Fire Ecology Tour with FUSEE
Sunday, March 22nd
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Spectacular Seeds Family Tour
Wednesday, March 25th
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Wildflower Garden Work Party
Saturday, March 28th
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Earth Day Work Parties Spectacular
See calendar

TransWild Forest Frolic
Saturday, April 25th
12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Wildflower Set Up Work Party
Friday, May 15th
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Wildflower Festival
Sunday, May 17th
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM



For more info and to sign up, visit: mountpisgaharboretum.org/learn/workshops/

Photo by Ilana Jakubowski

Become a Nature Guide

Spread the joy of nature! Volunteer Nature Guides help lead small groups of elementary school students on field trips at the Arboretum each Spring and Fall.



Volunteers are trained in local ecology, working with kids, plant & animal ID, & more!



Nature Guide Volunteer Orientation

Tuesday, March 10th
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Learn more at mountpishgaharboretum.org/nature-guides/

Photo by Sara Spoden

Education Intern Spotlight: Gracie & Willow

Like all Arboretum inhabitants, we are using the winter to prepare for the growth and action of Spring and Summer's walks, workshops. This year we are providing deeper experiences to the next generation of environmental educators by keeping on the same two education interns for the whole academic year, rather than hiring separately for Fall and Spring seasons.

Education Interns lead Discovery Tour field trips, family tours, prepare materials, and support our interpretive exhibits and curriculum development. For the 2025/2026 term, we are happy to introduce Willow Chester & Grace Minnix as Outdoor Education Interns!

Grace is currently attending University of Oregon, majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Earth Science. A big fan of dirt, Grace spent the summer of 2025 as a fire ecology field research assistant, conducting vegetation surveys in the Willamette and Umpqua forest resulting in an epic sock tan line. She also works as a bench lab tech with the Paleoecology & Biogeography lab at UO.

Willow is pursuing a B.S. in Education with a minor in Environmental Science and Special Education at the University of Oregon through a full-ride scholarship and soon starting at UOTeach, an accelerated Masters program that blends study with full time teaching. They have lived in Valencia and London and will talk about it at any opportunity!

If you see either of them out on trail, please feel free to give a warm welcome

By Sara Spoden, Education Manager

Photo by Sara Spoden

Life on Leafless Trees: Exploring Moss & Lichen

There may not be leaves on our deciduous trees right now, but that doesn't mean that they aren't teeming with life. The mosses and lichens found on these trees come to life in the wetter months after laying dormant through the dry summer. If you have a hand lens or magnifying loupe, you can find exciting new worlds in the branches of a nearby tree. Aside from the beautiful forms and interesting textures of the mosses and lichens themselves, you can find all sorts of tiny animal life such as mites and springtails. If you have access to a microscope, you can soak some moss in water and take samples to search for nematodes, rotifers, or even tardigrades (also known as water bears). But it doesn't take any special equipment at all to start looking more closely at the tiny ecosystems that surround us - all it takes is some curiosity!

By Kevin House, Environmental Educator

Photo by August Jackson



Thank You to All of Our Donors!

Whether you're a member, a business, a one-time donor, or a monthly donor, you empower us to do the work that we do.

From all of our staff and Board of Directors here at the Arboretum, thank you for your contribution!



Photo by August Jackson

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Julia Siporin
Mieko Aoki

And thank you to all who've offered their invaluable time and support to this magical place through our festivals, work parties, and more.

Commemorations

In Memory of Andrew Karasek

Jean Diana Diamond & Michael Karasek

In Memory of Bud Murphy

Jean Murphy

In Memory of Cheryl L. Roffe

Shirley Roffe & Rick Jones

In Memory of Claire Beekman

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In Memory of Dan Fuehring

Victoria Koch

In Memory of Dan Willis

Robin Cochran

In Memory of Dave Donielson

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Rick Beam

In Memory of David Hagen Ph.D

Iain Johnson

In Memory of Francis Kemler, founding member of the Arboretum

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In Memory of Jan Griffin

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In Memory of John Wilson

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In Memory of Ken Johnston

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In Memory of Lani Shimer

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