

Des Moines Founders Garden Club
Centennial Tree Project 2008-2017

STUDY:

- In 1995 J.C. Brenton and his wife Sue, our Club member began planning and planting their family farm acreage to become the Brenton Arboretum. Among the many experts they consulted was Chicago's Morton Arboretum Dendrologist Dr. George Ware. He became so enthused about the new arboretum that he gave them elm starts to take home in their car.
- Brenton Arboretum Horticulturist Andy Schmitz was assigned our mentor and tree buying facilitator. Over the past nine years, he has fulfilled that position along with continuing our education in all areas of tree selection, planting, and maintenance. Accolades in photo were grown by him from the Chicago starts.
- We consulted with Iowa State University plant pathologist Dr. Mark Gleason and his team of scientists conducting the 2005-2015 National Elm Trials of DED resistant elms. With their input, we selected trees to purchase and plant from the study's list of seventeen cultivars.
- The Clubs horticulture committee formed a Centennial Project Study group with lecturers from Iowa Master Gardeners, county and state arborists, and local nurseries.

GROW:

- Our Club allocated an annual budget of \$500 to fund the project for a five year period.
- Over the next five seasons our team established 164 DED resistant elms in Des Moines parks, cemeteries, and public spaces.
- We applied for and received almost \$10,000 in various community grants to aid with purchasing, planting, transplanting, and maintaining the project trees. The 90 inch tree spade used to transplant two Ulmus 'Morton' Accolades from the Brenton Arboretum to Ewing Park in Des Moines. Funds awarded by Des Moines Streetscape Grant of 2010.

EDUCATE:

- Each pair of trees had a volunteer "Monitor", trained by Club members to observe, document, and act as advocates for each of their trees.

- Civic groups who aided with volunteer Monitors included Polk and Dallas County Master Gardeners, Central Academy Youth Conservation Corps, Des Moines's Izaak Walton League of America, P.E.O. Chapters of Des Moines, and Men's Garden Clubs of America.
- Orchard Place for Youth Services utilized our program's nursery for us to train and aid the youth participants in earning their community service hours.

EVALUATE:

- Each February a committee of Arboretum, Park District, and Club members held a physical evaluation of selected trees to assess their success.
- Members also made recommendations on maintenance and suggestions for the next years planting and possible locations.

PROMOTE:

- Every year the list of area nurseries and garden centers requesting more information on our successful DED elms grew. Since we had no losses due to Dutch elm disease, we referred them to the National Elm Tree Study list.
- Committee members gave power point programs to civic organizations.
- Needless to say the "word of mouth" was spread with each volunteer's successful participation.
- At the completion of GCA Centennial a new threat was identified. The Emerald Ash Borer had invaded Iowa. In response, our club voted to extend the Centennial Tree Project another five years. The only change was to diversify our tree choices to include native and hardy species. Since then we have been able to plant one hundred additional trees.

* Bibliography and Centennial Project Master Tree List available upon request.

Judi Pruchnicki
 Centennial Tree Chairman
 2008-2017