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**Arboretum can aid your gardening aspirations**

Most DuPagers have visited the Morton Arboretum as a popular gateway spot, a place to stroll about and enjoy 40,000 trees and seasonal blooms. The arboretum’s specialty is “woody ornamentals” — plants with woody stems, such as trees, shrubs and groundcovers.

Arboretum staff members are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge through a variety of programs for the general public. Here is a sample:

- The Plant Clinic provides arboretum members and the general public with the opportunity to visit a “plant doctor”. Say, for instance, that a shrub you thought would be perfect for your backyard developed a strange growth on its stems. The staff “doctors” of the plant clinic will help you identify the disease or the growing condition causing the problem and recommend treatment. The staff will also assist with pre-planting questions regarding a plant selection for a specific landscape use (woody plant problems only, not flower, vegetable, houseplant or lawn care problems).

“We can’t draw up a landscape plans for someone,” says Webster Crowley, a plant information specialist, “but we can help them determine if the plant selection is appropriate for the site they are considering.”

Information needed by the Plant Clinic to make a diagnosis would include the locale’s degree of sun or shade, the type of water drainage and general exposure to the elements. “It can get very busy during the growing season. We answer about 5,000 questions during that time,” notes Crowley, adding that the service has grown in popularity over the 15 years it has been offered. Given heavy demand for information, patience when calling is important.

The Plant Clinic staff can assist you by phone or in person. During the growing season, April 1 - Oct. 31, the phone-in hours are 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. From Nov. 1 through March 31 the staff is available Wednesdays only — by phone from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. and in person from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Bring samples to the Administration Building on the east side of the arboretum, just west of the Visitor’s Center.

- The Morton Arboretum’s “Catalog of Woody Plants” is a useful tool for those who want to purchase unfamiliar trees or shrubs and want to know what they will look like when full-grown. Listing all 4,000 varieties of the arboretum’s living plants, the catalog is available at the main desk of the Visitor’s Center, east of Route 53. Selections are listed alphabetically and instructions on finding the plant’s location in the arboretum are provided by a staff assistant. Plants are listed in the catalog by their botanical names.

Additionally, several arboretum landscape gardens provide reference points for home landscapers, showing how plants can be sited in a garden or how various hedges can be clipped and maintained. They are organized by categories: hedges, dwarf shrubs, fragrances, groundcovers, roses, and herbs.

The following numbers can be used to obtain more information concerning Arboretum resources: The Plant Clinic, 964-6044; course information, 969-5682; general information recording: 969-8783; membership information, 968-0074.