THE BOSTON COMMITTEE
The Garden Club of America

THE BOSTON COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER
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The Boston Committee is an Area Committee of the Garden Club of America. We are celebrating over 35 years of horticultural initiatives to enhance the City of Boston

WHAT'S GOOD!

Boston Committee 2026 Fall Lecture: Dr. Ned Friedman Presents "TREE"

On October 27th, the Boston Committee welcomed Dr. William (Ned) Friedman, Director of the Arnold Arboretum and Arnold Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard, to our Fall Lecture and Luncheon at The Gardens at Elm Bank. Together, we experienced an overview of his acclaimed first-year seminar course, TREE. Ned shared with us the impetus for creating this course, and how he developed the coursework.

Photos courtesy of the Arnold Arboretum



The class, which examines a broad range of tree-related topics through multiple means, asks questions like:

- What is a tree?
- Why do trees turn color in the fall?
- How do trees migrate?
- Should trees have legal standing?

Students, mostly aged 18-19, grew along with their own trees, comparing notes on "Tree People" a shared group chat where they expressed incredible enthusiasm for their botanical journey, offering a hyper-enthusiastic triple "fire emoji" when one student's propagated tree began to sprout in their campus dorm room.



Ned's syllabus is a wonderful way to continue this wonderful exploration of Trees and Tree literature. Please enjoy the readings found within the syllabus. A "Tree" book club in 2027 may be of interest so that we can explore some of these ideas together.

First Year Seminar 52c Syllabus — Course Description

Have you hugged a tree lately? How about grown one? Photographed one? Drawn one? Written about one? Imagine a semester devoted to connecting two organisms: a person (you) and a tree (not you). Interacting with a single tree, you will explore its individual history, evolutionary history, life cycle, leaves, bark, roots, flowers, cones, and architecture.

FULL SYLLABUS AND READING LIST CAN BE FOUND ON THE ARBORETUM'S WEBSITE AT:

https://arboretum.harvard.edu/tree-seminar-syllabus/

WHAT'S GOOD!

Course Description, cont.

In an age of environmental destruction and outright murder of our biological brethren, there is something deeply troubling about humanity's relationship with nature. Technology has left us with mere facsimiles of nature—pixilated abstractions of biodiversity through satellite imagery, decoded strings of DNA—and we, as a species, have become fundamentally disconnected from actual nature and the magnificent organisms with which we share the earth. In this seminar, we will work to understand and give agency to trees as individual organisms, literally rooted in the ground, and evolutionarily rooted in deep time. Each student will also work with an individual tree in the living collections of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and observe (see) this organism throughout the entire semester...the vast and variant organisms with which we share the planet. The full syllabus, and reading list can be found on the Arboretum's website.

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Week 1– What is a tree? Can the essence of a tree be defined?
Arboretum experience: A walk on the grounds

Week 2 – Birth of the concept of an arboretum; birth of the Arnold Arboretum
Arboretum experience: Tour of plant propagation; planting a tree and the miracle of a tree seed

Week 3 – Intertwining trees and families
Arboretum experience: American chestnut trees and pecan trees

Week 4 – The origins of arborescence: an evolutionary historical perspective
Cambridge campus experience: A visit with fossil trees in paleobotanical collections

Week 5 – Roots, the unseen half (architecture and symbioses)
Arboretum experience: Excavating a root system with an air spade

Week 6 – Bonsai
Arboretum experience: In the bonsai collection with bonsai master and manager of plant production

Week 7– Autumn colors: the ongoing mystery of why?
Arboretum experience: A walk on the grounds to experience peak fall colors

Week 8 – Trees move! Global migrations of temperate trees
Botany Libraries experience: Charles Darwin and Asa Gray correspondence on plant biogeography

Week 9 – Should trees have legal standing?
Arboretum experience: A walk on the grounds

Week 10 – How to read a tree and contemplating the meaning of tree longevity
Arboretum experience: Dissecting buds, reading twigs, and coring a tree

Week 11 & 12– What is a tree? Student presentations
Submit: Five-page (double spaced) reflection on a tree and the course

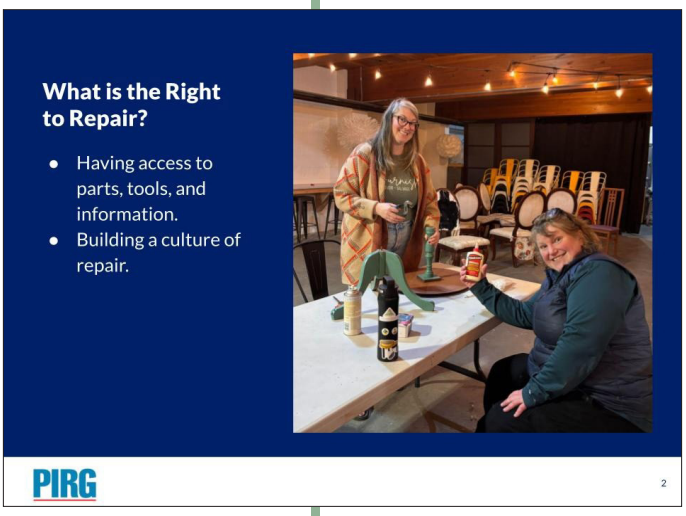
WHAT'S GOOD!

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Liora Petter-Lipstein of U.S. PIRG on Advocacy for "Right to Repair"

The Boston Committee's "What's Good" speaker Liora Petter-Lipstein works with local repair shops across the country to increase access to parts, tools, and information to reduce the amount of electronic waste we create. She works with state and national partners at PIRG to advocate for consumers, advancing solutions to problems that affect our health, our safety and our wellbeing.

What is the "Right to Repair?" It means giving the public access to part, tools, and especially the products manuals to allow an individual to make repairs to an electronic item and prevent throwing the item into the trash, adding to the *68 million tons of electronic waste* created annually.



Read more about the "Electronic Waste Graveyard" created by the U.S. PIRG Education Fund HERE.

The presence neonicotinoids (neonics) in crop seeds and other plants is another critical topic long of interest to GCA gardeners. Neonics continue to threaten bees despite being identified as a cause of pollinator species decline, and continue to be applied to the majority of Massachusetts' corn seeds. We can help in the effort to ban these toxic seeds. A petition to take action is HERE.



The Rose Kennedy Greenway's Director of Horticulture, Brian Gibbons, stands with his team after receiving the 2026 Boston Committee Beautification Award

Boston Committee Beautification Award

The 2026 Boston Committee Beautification Award was presented this year to The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy.

The Conservancy's extraordinary stewardship of 17 acres of urban parkland and horticultural and programmatic enhancements at the Greenway have made Boston a more vibrant and more verdant city for all.

THE GREENWAY