

FWP Educates Parks' Visitors
Submitted by Carol Gutwalt, Friends of Waterford Park

Having planted numerous new trees, shrubs, and wildflowers during the spring in Rock Creek and Waterford Parks, the Friends of Waterford Park is now focusing on nurturing these new acquisitions, as well as maintaining those species planted since FWP's inception in 2005. An added focus this summer will be educating visitors about the numerous species found in the park. While many of the visitors to the park enjoy the various species, particularly the wildflowers in bloom this past spring, few can identify what's what. FWP's latest project hopes to improve visitors' identification skills.

Interested in identifying the various older trees that have been part of the park for years, Barbara Manaia, FWP member, researched the trees and their characteristics and created informative signs. At an early spring board of directors meeting, FWP Treasurer Linda Berkheimer mentioned a large fallen tree that needed to be removed from her yard. Interested in giving the tree a second life, the board recruited FWP member Brad Rowland with his chain saw to create display bases for Barbara's laminated signs. These trunk signs now move from spot to spot in the park for visitors to learn about the various species in the park. Since the park still has its share of invasives, Barbara also created some signs identifying the enemies of the park.

An additional sign project identifies almost fifty other species by name throughout the park. As Carol Gutwalt prepared the signs, she discovered that they are particularly useful to those who walk along the park's paved path, since the signs are visible from the path and can educate visitors during their strolls. The plastic signs are attached to pressure treated lumber, are displayed low to the ground, and will hopefully be informative for many years to come.

These two signage projects join signs already posted by each of the park's large, donated specimen trees. The sign for each of these trees indicates the species, the donor, and, if applicable, the person(s) to whom the tree is dedicated.

FWP is committed to educating its members, as well as those who visit Rock Creek and Waterford Parks from adjacent neighborhoods, about the native species found in the parks. Questions about FWP's work can be emailed to info@friendsofwaterfordpark.com