

## Polly Wakefield Planned Giving

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**M**ary May Binney Wakefield, or Polly, applied all she learned at the Arboretum to the creation of a landscape that is as delightful and original as is its maker. Within her garden there are several acres of Chinese dogwoods grown in an orchard-like setting that celebrate

her patience and hint at a certain stubborn singlemindedness. It was during her first Arboretum propagating class in 1956 that her fascination with this woody species began. By the 1970s she had introduced and patented several cultivars including 'Greensleeves', 'Moonbeam', 'Moonlight', 'Silverstar', and 'Twinkle'. In the recently published *Dogwoods*, Polly's 'Greensleeves' is ranked as "one of the very best *C. kousa* cultivars available."

Polly's interests and accomplishments extended far beyond the confines of her own garden walls. She served as trustee or board member of nearly all our important horticultural institutions. When the Friends of the Public Garden was formed, Polly declared that "Every garden needs friends—in the case of

a garden that is always open to the public, lots of friends," and became an active member, chairing the committee on horticultural planning.

According to Gwilym S. Jones, director of the Center for Vertebrate Studies at Northeastern University, with whom she worked on the establishment of the Massachusetts Nature Preserves System and the Nature Preserves Council, "That legislation became law solely on the strength of Polly's character, including her dogged persistence. She had a vision and her pursuit of that vision included a direct discussion with Senate president Bulger when she happened to encounter him on the street."

Polly is the only known recipient of two gold medals awarded by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society—just two of the many tributes bestowed on her during her life-



Peter Dei Tredici

Polly in her garden with her companion Patty.

time. The Massachusetts Tree Warden's & Forester's Association awarded their highest honor, the George E. Stone Award, to Polly for her commitment to their mission and her support of their

Arbor Day programs. The Amy Angell Collier Montague Medal of the Garden Club of America recognized her many accomplishments, stating that "She has truly enhanced the quality of life for us all." Polly herself created an honor: the Wakefield Award for the Small Garden is presented annually at the New England Spring Flower Show.

I met this remarkable woman 36 years ago during the last season of Donald Wyman's Friday morning walks in the Arboretum. She was the soft-spoken lady in the sunbonnet

*One summer the town decreed that no water could be used for ornamental plants except by bucket—after a brief effort at compliance, I decided to dig my own well!*

*Polly Wakefield, 1990*

who kept Dr. Wyman on his toes with her questions. When I became the Arboretum's librarian, her questions were soon directed toward me. It is relatively easy to be a booklover, but far more challenging to be a lover of libraries. Polly was both.

"People just do not realize that libraries are expensive," was her constant refrain, and while she occasionally inquired if I was able keep up with new acquisitions, she never failed to ask if I had money enough to care for the collection.

In 1981, Polly established a book fund to benefit the Arboretum's Library in Jamaica Plain. In 2000, she established the Horticultural Library Fund of the Arnold Arboretum, a large endowed fund that continued to support the library's work. Finally, upon her passing in 2005, Polly left a very substantial bequest to support the operation, maintenance, and development of the Jamaica Plain Horticultural Library's overall collections. If you have a bequest for the Arnold Arboretum already in place, please let us know so we can ensure that your wishes will be carried out. If you would like more information about leaving a bequest to the Arboretum, confidential inquiries may be directed to Robert P. Surabian at the Arnold Arboretum (617.524.1718 x140 or robert\_surabian@harvard.edu) or Anne McClintock in University Planned Giving (1.800.446.1277 or amclint@harvard.edu).

## Tea Time!

Please save the date for tea at the Arboretum

Thursday afternoon,  
October 27, 2005

Harvard Management Company and University Planned Giving staff will present a talk on building effective financial and estate planning strategies. Details to follow.