Dear Friends,

Care for a great plant story?

It’s an unlikely survival tale of a remarkable tree and illustrates the critical role you can play to keep conservation a top priority at the Arnold Arboretum with a gift to our Campaign for the Living Collections.

The beautiful flower depicted on this card belongs to one of a pair of centenarian Franklin trees (*Franklinia alatamaha*) growing on Bussey Hill—two of the world’s largest and the oldest documented trees of the species in existence. Originally discovered and collected along the Altamaha River in Georgia in 1765 by father and son explorers John and William Bartram, this rare member of the tea family (named after Benjamin Franklin) would go extinct in the wild within just a few decades. Without the work of institutions like the Arboretum—beginning with the Bartrams’ own garden in Philadelphia—which grew, preserved, and shared *Franklinia* over the past two-and-a-half centuries, this amazing species would no longer exist. As someone who has extensively studied and published research on the unique reproductive biology of *Franklinia*, I can attest that science would miss more than just the beautiful late season blooms and vibrant fall foliage of this incredible tree if the Bartrams—and the Arboretum—had not committed to its preservation.

Not every plant we grow has as dramatic a story as *Franklinia*. However, with one in every five plant species currently endangered around the globe, there has never been a more important time to focus on conservation. Every plant we grow at the Arnold Arboretum may enlighten us about Earth’s past, help us understand biodiversity today, or provide clues to what the future holds as climates change. Preserved in our collections, our plants may also help restore wild populations now extirpated due to habitat loss, competition by invasive species, and human-induced environmental change.
How will your gift impact conservation efforts by the Arnold Arboretum?

It will enable our staff to mount important expeditions around the world targeting rare and endangered plants for preservation in our landscape. It will enhance ongoing collaborations to safeguard species from loss with partners like the US Forest Service, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, and the Center for Plant Conservation. Your gift will also help us share more of the stories of our plants with you and others—including thousands of Boston Public School students who annually attend our programs that teach the importance of trees and stewarding our environment. Getting the next generation excited and prepared to conserve is essential to a greener future.

As we look ahead to 2018, your generous gift will ensure that the Arnold Arboretum continues our critical work to collect, study, and protect trees for the health of our planet and the preservation of our natural heritage. With your confidence and help, we can make a difference in the survival stories of more plants like *Franklinia*. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

William (Ned) Friedman  
Director of the Arnold Arboretum  
Arnold Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Harvard University
**Front image:** A bee collects pollen from the camellia-like flower of *Franklinia alatamaha* (AA accession #2428-3*A). Cup-shaped, five-petaled, and centered by a cluster of bright yellow stamens, the flowers of the Franklin tree delight visitors to the Explorers Garden from late summer into autumn. This tree is one of two Arnold Arboretum accessions dating from 1905, which are the oldest documented individuals of the species in cultivation. Photograph by William (Ned) Friedman.