Red-leaf Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum forma atropurpureum 22717*A)*
In a word, what is the Arnold Arboretum?

If you are one of the hundreds of scientists who visit us to conduct scientific investigations in our landscape or in our labs, you might say research. Perhaps you are one of the many teachers helping Boston schoolchildren learn about the mechanics of nature in our collections each season—and for you, it’s education. Maybe you come here with family or friends to relish the natural beauty and serenity of this urban garden, and for you, the Arboretum means community.

The Arnold Arboretum touches lives in innumerable ways, and we encourage you to give back to this special, diverse landscape during our annual appeal.

No matter what aspect you value most, the one word I believe that binds everything we do together is horticulture. It is the cultivation and lifetime care of the plants we collect for science, education, and appreciation that make everything else we do possible. Without our 16,000 accessioned plants, there would be no research to illuminate their mysteries, no opportunities to share their diversity or their critical importance to our planet.

Since I became the Arboretum’s eighth director in 2011, we have reinforced our commitment to continually increase the excellence of care for our plants and landscape. Under the leadership of Andrew Gapinski, our head of horticulture, the Arboretum has advanced several significant new initiatives, including a comprehensive soil assessment and enrichment program, as well as a sustainable system for recycling landscape waste into nutrient-rich compost. We also invested in a new full-time climbing arborist and additional term and full-time horticulturists this year. Our Campaign for the Living Collections—in which we aspire to collect an additional 400 taxa from native habitats around the temperate world—has further galvanized our efforts to improve growing conditions across our 281 acres.
But the real costs of providing exceptional care to the plants we collect, study, and that you cherish, are extensive and enormous. Trees at the Arnold Arboretum do not grow themselves. Constant care is required to fend off pathogens and invasive insect pests; regular programs help to remediate soil compaction (from the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of visitors annually); year-round pruning maintains healthy canopies; supplemental watering (by hand) protects plants during increasingly severe droughts brought on by climate change. A new lift to transport our arborists more than ninety feet in the air to work in our trees will cost the Arboretum $160,000—worth every penny since it will promote greater plant care and health. An air spade, used to loosen hard soils around tender root systems, will be nearly $2,500 to replace. Back-of-the-envelope calculations yield a cost of roughly $500 per tree per year to care for the living collections at the heart of the Arnold Arboretum.

To preserve the beauty and vitality of the Arboretum, not only one of greater Boston’s most beloved public landscapes but also one of the finest botanical institutions in the world, I ask that you consider sponsoring the care of one ($500), ten ($5,000), or dare I hope, one hundred ($50,000) trees. There is no greater gift that I can imagine than taking good care of the venerable plant collections of the Arnold Arboretum.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, I invite you to make a gift that reflects what the Arboretum means to you, to Boston, and to the trees we share with the world.

With gratitude and best wishes,

William (Ned) Friedman, Director of the Arnold Arboretum
Arnold Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Harvard University