From the Director

From effecting a profound and historical impact on horticulture in the United States to pioneering (and continuing) work in global plant exploration, the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University has contributed a great deal to making Boston a hotspot for the study and appreciation of trees. An essential part of our story and our identity—and what makes us truly unique among academic units at Harvard and botanical museums around the world—is the transformational thousand-year agreement (renewable) we share with the city we inhabit.

Since 1882, when Harvard donated the property we occupy to the City of Boston, the Arnold Arboretum has belonged to the people of Boston as a community resource while continuing to grow and thrive as a privately-funded museum and research center. Part of our strength and meaning as an institution lies in the absence of barriers—physical, cultural, economic—between our collections and the many communities enriched by them. As we approach our sesquicentennial celebration in 2022, we are working on many fronts to make the Arboretum and its treasures more readily accessible and available to support the increasingly diverse and vital needs of science and society.

In this issue of Silva, get to know your Arboretum a little better from the ground up. Head of Horticulture Andrew Gapinski and Gardener Brendan Keegan reveal some of the philosophy, planning, and partnerships underpinning our growing focus on making more holistic and sustainable choices in the care of our collections and our environment. Explore two collections in particular—Ginkgo and Forsythia—which recently were recognized as the preeminent holdings of these plant groups in North America by the Plant Collections Network administered by the American Public Gardens Association. And find out how our wild-sourced holdings of American chestnut (Castanea dentata) and ashes (Fraxinus spp.) have helped one scientist learn more about how plants adapt to contagion and pests—vital knowledge as global change continues to bring new challenges to our plant communities.

By the time you read this, our willows will have begun leafing out along Meadow Road, buds in the Forsythia bank featured on the back cover of this issue will be poised to burst into brilliant gold, and the larches in our conifer collection will delight the eye with colorful spring cones. This growing season, enjoy a hands-on workshop, learn about science in the landscape, or explore plants you love on a guided or self-guided tour. Come and discover how spring unfolds among more than one hundred plant families right here in Boston.

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