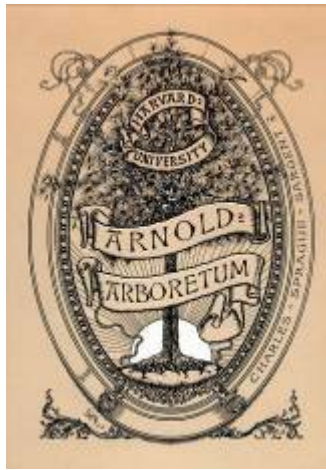


Archives IV B-2 BBM

Bussey Brook Meadow collection, 1977- : Guide.



The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

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Bussey Brook Meadow collection, 1977- : Guide.

Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

125 Arborway, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

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Descriptive Summary

Repository: Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Call No.: IV B-2 BBM

Location: Archives

Title: Bussey Brook Meadow collection, 1977-.

Date(s): 1977-

Creator: Margo W. Reynolds (Series I) and Archives (Series II)

Quantity: 8 linear inches (one box and one oversized folder)

Language of material: English

Abstract: The Bussey Brook Meadow collection contains 2 series, Series I: Community Gardens was created by Margo W. Reynolds, Staff Assistant as she implemented and managed the Arboretum's Community Gardens from 1977-1981. It includes correspondence, notes, legal documents, applications for plots, and newsletters for plot holders. Series II: Bussey Brook Meadow was compiled by the Archives to document management and use of the Bussey Brook Meadow, including the work of the Arboretum Park Conservancy. Materials include correspondence, reports, surveys, and signage dating from 1985 to the present.

Note: Access to Finding Aid record in [HOLLIS](#).

Preferred Citation: Bussey Brook Meadow collection. Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

Additional Material: Additional material related to construction of the Blackwell Footpath can be found in ID 3C Series V: Records of the South Street Footpath Construction Project, 1998-2002. Material related to Bussey Brook is in ID 3D: Brooks, Ponds, and Watersheds. Plans for Bussey Brook Meadow are located in Drawer 5, Folder 13 of the Map Case. Plans for construction of the footpath are located in Drawer 5, Folder 13a of the Map Case. Digital images of Bussey Brook and Bussey Brook Meadow can be viewed on-site using [HOLLIS Images](#). Search terms "Bussey Brook", "Bussey Brook Meadow", "South Street tract", and "Blackwell Footpath." For records of the Boston Natural Areas Fund, the Arnold Arboretum Park Endowment, and the Arboretum Park Conservancy, see VI APC Arboretum Park Conservancy records, 1977-2002.

Processing Information

Liz Francis, October 2011. Revised Liz Francis, December 2011, April 2012. Revised Larissa Glasser, January 2023, August 2024.

Acquisition Information

Provenance: Series I: Community Gardens was transferred by Margo W. Reynolds to the Arboretum's Archives in 1984. Series II: Bussey Brook Meadow was compiled by the Archives and further accruals are expected.

Terms of Access

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Historical Note



In 1996, the 24-acre Bussey Brook Meadow was added to the Arboretum, marking the first addition to the property since 1895. Prior to 1996, the City of Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), and Harvard University each owned part of the meadow. An act of the legislature combined the properties into a single parcel under the Arboretum's indenture.

Prior to 1996, the Arboretum used the University's part of the meadow as a nursery holding site and then for community gardens from 1979-1981. More than one hundred residents held plots during this time, growing fruit, vegetables, and flowers. The meadow suffered a number of problems during this period, including vandalism and illegal dumping.

The addition of Bussey Brook Meadow to the Arboretum's indenture in 1996 ensured that the meadow will always be public park space. The inclusion of the meadow was largely the

result of one man's efforts. In 1977 John Blackwell (1912-2010) founded The Boston Natural Areas Fund (BNAF) with his wife Genie Beal to empower the City of Boston to acquire private funds to purchase undeveloped urban lands. The fund focused particularly on property identified in the 1976 report "Boston's Urban Wilds" prepared by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. During the period 1977-1983, the BNAF assisted in the purchase or transfer of over 100 acres of green space to the City of Boston Conservation Commission¹.

In 1984, discussions began between the BNAF and Peter Ashton, Director of the Arnold Arboretum, regarding ways the BNAF could support the Arboretum's public park function in a time of financial challenge. From these discussions, the Arnold Arboretum Park Endowment was proposed in 1985. Its purpose would be to solicit donations from a range of donors and establish a 5–10-million-dollar endowment². The South Street tract of land was identified early on (1986) as a patch of green space appropriate for acquisition³. The organization's name changed to the Arnold Arboretum Park Endowment in 1987 and in 1994 it changed again to the Arboretum Park Conservancy (APC) to more accurately reflect the organization's mission to promote and protect the public interest in the Arboretum as a public park. The APC assisted in the acquisition of the South Street tract and has continued to provide funds for improvements to the Arnold Arboretum's grounds.

John Blackwell grew up in Cambridge before attending Harvard University and earning his master's degree in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Blackwell then began a long career as an urban planner, especially interested in green space. He worked independently, then for the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources before becoming president of the Charles River Watershed Association. With Genie, Blackwell launched [Boston Natural Areas Network](#) and the Boston Greenspace Alliance in addition to the APC.

Blackwell envisioned better public access to the Arboretum from the Forest Hills MBTA station. He and the APC Board of Directors raised more than \$800,000 from public and private sources to design and build the public access footpath and the granite and iron gates at the Washington and South Street entrances. An estimated three hundred individual donors, foundations, and trusts funded the construction of these two gates. The path takes visitors through a field of wildflowers and by Bussey Brook. In 2002, Mayor Thomas Menino dedicated the footpath, which is now known as the Blackwell Footpath.



John Blackwell

Since the footpath's dedication, the APC has made many more contributions to the interpretation and conservation of the meadow as a protected urban wild. In 2003, the APC

planted disease-resistant elms along the Blackwell Footpath and with a Garden Clubs of America gift, planted three thousand bulbs near the Washington Street gate. In 2004, the APC placed three stone blocks along the footpath to be used as benches. They also funded an extensive botanical inventory and installed interpretive panels identifying the various wildflowers in the meadow with illustrations by APC member Anne Schmalz. Since then, the organization has managed youth crews who provided tree care, clearing, and invasive plant weeding along the footpath and in parts of the meadow. They also continue to sponsor nature and bird walks at the Arboretum.

The Massachusetts Highway Department has also contributed to invasive plant management at the site. The department removed destructive species before planting meadow grass and nearly five hundred (mostly native) trees and shrubs. According to the *Operations and Management Plan for Bussey Brook Meadow*, the Arboretum will maintain the land “as an ‘urban wild’ rather than as an active part of the botanical collection.” This means that the area will be maintained as necessary for public access and safety but will be left otherwise interrupted.

It is an ‘urban wild’ that the meadow is most valuable for research. In *Bussey Brook Meadow- A Plan for the Future*, Peter Del Tredici writes,

Under the current management regimen, the site will be allowed to develop into a site where scientists from the Arboretum as well as from surrounding universities can document long-term changes in plant succession and measure various ecosystem functions—including vegetation structure, wildlife abundance, phenology and biogeochemical cycling. One of the main difficulties traditionally facing researchers who study urban ecology is finding vegetated sites that will remain open and undisturbed over a long enough time periods for observations to become ecologically meaningful.

Del Tredici summarizes current research conducted in the meadow in his article, [“The Ecology of an Urban Wild: Monitoring Spontaneous Plants in Bussey Brook Meadow”](#), published in the Fall/Winter 2011-2012 issue of *Silva*.



Aerial photograph of Bussey Brook Meadow showing the Blackwell Footpath by Jay Connor, 2010

1. Boston Natural Areas Fund, "*Open and Green Forever*," 1983.
2. Statement of Eugenie Beal to the Administration and Finance Subcommittee of the Arnold Arboretum Visiting Committee, October 8, 1985.
3. Letter from John Blackwell to Peter Ashton, March 14, 1986.

Scope and Content

The Bussey Brook Meadow Collection documents the management and use of the Bussey Brook Meadow from 1977 through the present. Series I: Community Gardens contains materials relating to the Community Gardens which operated in the meadow from 1979 to 1981 including correspondence, notes, legal documents, applications for plots, and newsletters for plot holders. This part of the collection was compiled by Margo W. Reynolds, Staff Assistant during the period she managed the gardens. Series II: Bussey Brook Meadow was compiled by the Archives to document management and use of the Bussey Brook Meadow and includes materials related to the Blackwell Footpath, the Arboretum's partnership with the Arboretum Park Conservancy, stewardship plans, a botanical survey, and interpretive signage. It contains correspondence, brochures, reports, maps, and signage dating from 1985 to the present.

Arrangement

The Bussey Brook Meadow Collection is arranged into 2 series:

Series I: Community Gardens

Series II: Bussey Brook Meadow

Container List

Box 1

Series I: Community Gardens

Folder 1. Community Gardens Correspondence and Notes, 1977-79

- Margo W. Reynolds, Staff Assistant to Rebecca Newbury, Division of Agricultural Land Use outlining plans for the community garden. August 9, 1977
- Rebecca Newbury to Margo W. Reynolds regarding liability, contracts, and regulations for the garden. April 19, 1978
- Sample liability release form provided by the Department of Food and Agriculture. c1978
- Sample liability release form. c1978
- Suzanne Mariocha to Margo W. Reynolds requesting a plot in the garden. January 26, 1979
- Margo W. Reynolds to Peter Ashton, Director reporting on the successes and failures of the garden to date. February 16, 1979
- Application for a plot in the garden. Spring, 1979
- Proposal for the installation of a windmill-powered water pump for the garden. Peter Ashton. July 1979
 - Diagram: "Wind powered water pump." Peter Ashton. July 18, 1979.
- Notes from meeting with Nellie Shocken about lack of security in the garden. August 10, 1979
- Notes on garden maintenance. September 26, 1979
- Notes from meeting with the Community Garden Steering Committee. October 16, 1979
- Notes from garden meeting. November 5, 1979
- Notes from conversation with Nellie Schocken regarding vandalism at the garden. November 1979
- Notes from garden meeting. December 3, 1979
- Notes on garden parking. December 20, 1979
- Postcard invitation to meeting for plot holders. December 1979

2. Water Table Testing, 1979

- Plan: Southwest Corridor Project: Proposed Boring Locations. Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. Copy. June 1978
- Log: Results of boring #III-70-5, Southwest Corridor section 3. Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. January 3, 1979
- Log: Results of boring #III-70-8, Southwest Corridor section 3. Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. January 4, 1979
- Log: Results of boring #III-80-15, Southwest Corridor section 3. Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. January 4, 1979
- Log: Results of boring #III-70-6, Southwest Corridor section 3. Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. January 5, 1979

- Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. to Boston Urban Gardeners. Letter of transmittal for boring logs and boring location plan. March 22, 1979
- Goldberg, Zoino, Dunncliff and Associates, Inc. to Boston Urban Gardeners regarding boring logs and boring location plan. March 27, 1979
- Diagram: Well for community garden, with notes. Terry Buck. 1980



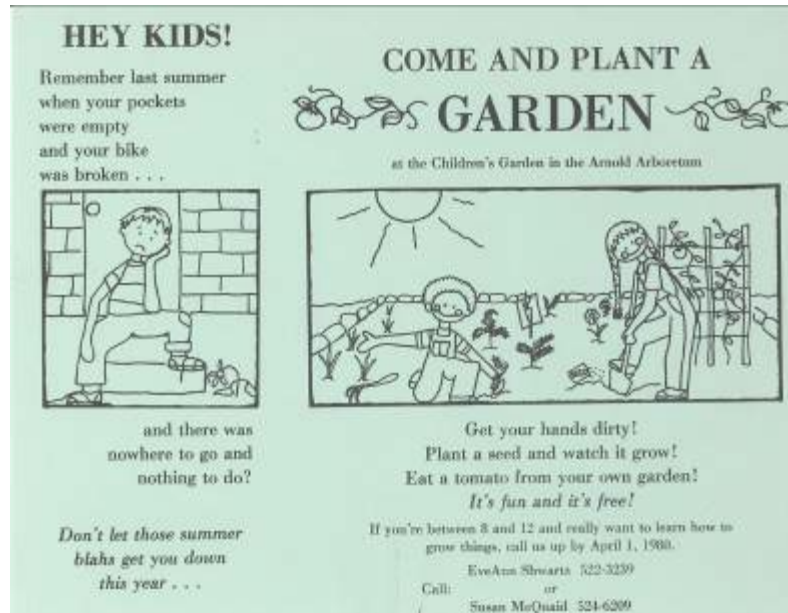
Aerial photograph of Community Gardens.
1979. Image from Image Portal.

3. Community Gardens Plot Holder Lists

- List: "Arboretum Community Garden Members." April 1980
- List: "Arboretum Community Garden – Plot holders and members." n.d.

4. Community Gardens Correspondence and Notes, 1980-81

- Notes: Meeting with Nellie Schocken regarding the well and a seed donation from the Department of Food and Agriculture. February 4, 1980
- Notes: Meeting with Terry Buck. February 1980
- Notes: Community garden meeting. March 3, 1980
- Meeting notice for plot registration. March 1980



Poster: "Hey Kids! Come and Plant a Garden." Spring, 1980

- Poster: "Hey Kids! Come and Plant a Garden at the Children's Garden in the Arboretum." 8.5 x 11". Spring, 1980
- Notes: Meeting regarding trash, water pump, and vandalism at the garden. May 7, 1980

Efforts are being made to get more MANURE.

It's the pheasants who are eating all of your pea seeds!

Excerpt from newsletter for plot holders. May 24, 1980

- Newsletter for plot holders. May 24, 1980
- Notes: Mosquito control, vandalism, etc. June 16, 1980
- Newsletter from Greenstock Urban Gardening Program. Suffolk County Cooperative Extension Service. "Plant now for a Halloween harvest." Summer, 1980
- Application for a plot in the community garden. n.d.
- Notes: Garden problems in 1978-1980, including water, vandalism, etc. c1980
- Notes: "A.A. [Arnold Arboretum] Costs to Community Garden Group." n.d.
- "Community Garden Release." n.d.
- "Proposed Rules for Community Gardeners." n.d.
- "Application for a Community Garden." n.d.
- List: 1980 Steering Committee members. 1980
- "Application for a Community Garden 1981." 1981

Robert Gerson, Horticulturalist, Urban Gardening Program, Suffolk County Cooperative Extension Service to "Coordinator" announcing planning meeting. February 17, 1981

- "Summary of planning meeting, February 3, for coordinators' workshop." Urban Gardening Program. February 1981

Series II: Bussey Brook Meadow



Blackwell Footpath photographed by Sylvia Winter, 2004. Image from Image Portal.

1. Arboretum Access Footpath/ Blackwell Footpath

- Memo: Gary Koller to Peter Ashton and Arboretum Staff regarding new public access across Stony Brook Marsh (from Forest Hills Station across South Street Tract). February 25, 1985
- Brown, Richardson & Rowe, Inc. (landscape architects) postcard promoting the Blackwell Footpath. Postmarked June 6, 2003
- John R. Freeman, President, Arboretum Park Conservancy to Sylvia Winter reporting the activities of the Conservancy and requesting financial support. September 2004
- John R. Freeman to "Friend" reporting the activities of the Conservancy and requesting financial support. September 2005
 - Invitation: Bussey Brook Meadow nature walk with Chris Mattrick from the New England Wildflower Society. September 2005
- John R. Freeman to "Friend" reporting the activities of the Conservancy, including wildflower signage along the Blackwell Footpath. October 2006



Brochure: Arboretum Park Conservancy. c2006

- Brochure: Arboretum Park Conservancy. c2006
- "Bussey Brook Meadow/ Blackwell Footpath/ Arboretum Access Footpath"

2. Botanical Survey of Bussey Brook Meadow, 2005



"Figure 3: Natural Communities at Bussey Brook Meadow" from the *Botanical Survey of Bussey Brook Meadow*. 2005

- VanDervort-Sneed, Joy and Kane, Ailene. *Botanical Survey of Bussey Brook Meadow*. New England Wildflower Society. 2005. 2 copies.

3. Draft Stewardship Plan, 2002



Plan for stone bench locations from the *Bussey Brook Meadow at the Arnold Arboretum: Draft Stewardship Plan*. 2002

- Brown, Richardson, and Rowe, Inc. *Bussey Brook Meadow at the Arnold Arboretum: Draft Stewardship Plan*. September 12, 2002

4. Bussey Brook Meadow Mapping, 2004

- Map: "The Arnold Arboretum." Visitor information map displayed on Blackwell Path. 2004
- Sylvia Winter to Mary Reed regarding modifications to map displayed on Blackwell Path. November 23, 2004. Email
 - 2 maps with notes about modifications to be made. 2004

5. Arboretum Park Conservancy Partnership

- Notes: Conversation with Caroline Donnelly Richardson, Manager of Horticultural Information regarding Arboretum Park Conservancy partnership. October 28, 2004
- Notes: Meeting with John Freeman, Nina Brown, David Morse, and Anne Schmalz of Arboretum Park Conservancy regarding partnership. November 18, 2004
- Notes: Meeting with Bob Cook and others regarding Arboretum Park Conservancy partnership. November 22, 2004
- Caroline Donnelly Richardson to Bob Cook, Richard Schulhof, Robert Surabian, and Sylvia Winter confirming an agenda for a meeting with Arboretum Park Conservancy. November 12, 2004. Email
- Sylvia Winter to Richard Schulhof regarding Arboretum Park Conservancy signage in Bussey Brook Meadow. March 10, 2006
- Mission statement: Arboretum Park Conservancy. n.d.

6. John Blackwell Biographical Material

- Program: "John Thomas Blackwell: A celebration of his life at the Arboretum's Bussey Brook Meadow." September 28, 2010

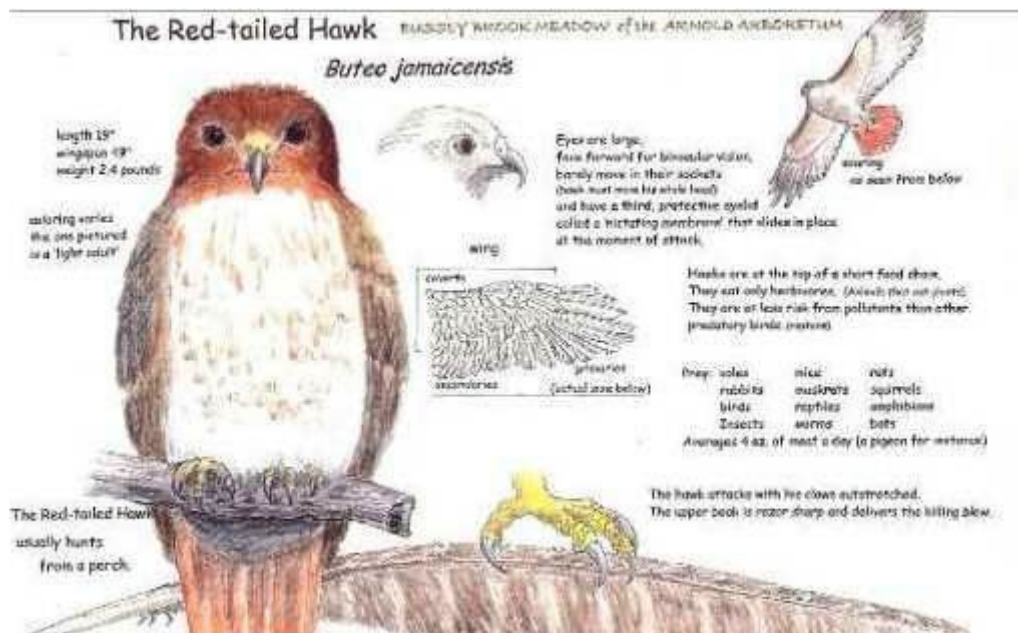
7. "Bussey Brook Meadow: A Plan for the Future" by Peter Del Tredici

- Del Tredici, Peter. "Bussey Brook Meadow: A Plan for the Future." April 28, 2011

Oversized Folder: Drawings for Bussey Brook Meadow Signage by Anne Schmalz

23 11x14" photocopies of drawings for the interpretive signage in Bussey Brook Meadow.

- Queen Anne's Lace
- The Meadow in Bloom
- Goldenrods
- Plants Wintering Over
- Migration
- Seeds and Pods of Autumn
- Winter Bouquet
- Gone to Seed



The Red-Tailed Hawk illustration by Anne Schmalz. c2005

- The Red-Tailed Hawk
- Grasses, Rushes and Sedges
- Seasonality
- Tracking Animals
- Snowflakes
- Breaking Dormancy
- We Are Looking for Signs of Spring!

- Spring Birds
- Lilac Sunday
- June Flowers
- Birds of the Bussey Brook Meadow
- Vines
- Stinging Nettles
- The Life Cycle of a Monarch Butterfly
- Late Summer Look-alikes

Image Portal

Digital images of Bussey Brook and Bussey Brook Meadow (including those below) can be viewed on-site through library-archives staff via Access Bank. Search terms include "Bussey Brook", "Bussey Brook Meadow", "South Street tract", and "Blackwell Footpath."



The meadow's Mesa photographed by Julie Coop, 2007 The meadow photographed by Jim Harrison, 2005



Bussey Brook photographed by Jim Harrison, 2005 The meadow photographed by Phyllis Andersen, 1990