

Text of “Where Nature is the Guiding Hand” Cell Phone Tour at The Willowood Arboretum

Welcome and Instructions

Hello and welcome to Willowood Arboretum, a facility of the Morris County Park Commission. This cell phone tour guides you through Willowood’s core garden areas and will take about an hour to complete.

You will proceed from one “Stop” or place of interest, to the next. At each tour stop you can listen to several audio clips. At the end of each audio clip are directions for where to walk next.

You can start, stop or replay it whenever you please.

To stop, simply hang up.

To re-start, re-dial the cell phone tour number again and you will automatically pick up where you left off.

To repeat a stop, press the Stop Number again.

There are also opportunities for your feedback. Please leave us a comment about your visit today.

In section one of the tour, stops 1-14, you will hear about the Tubbs’ brothers and their gardens. In section 2 of the tour, stops 15-22, you will hear about the plant species that were brought to the United States by E.H. Wilson, an extraordinary plant explorer of the early twentieth century.

Press #1 to hear the introduction of section 1

Stop #1 – Introduction

Over 100 years ago, two brothers stood on this spot. Their names were Henry and Robert Tubbs and they loved plants.

Looking for a country home that was a commutable distance from their jobs in Manhattan, they rambled around the Gladstone area until they found Paradise Farm, as Willowood was then known. They purchased this 130+ acre property in 1908 and named it for the groups of big willow trees that grew along the original entrance of the property.

The Willows are gone now and the road has a new name, Longview.

But Henry and Robert’s dream of a garden in which “nature takes you by the hand,” continues to grow and thrive.

Press #101 to hear more about the property or walk straight ahead to STOP #2, the Stone Barn

Stop #101 – Context

Every garden must be viewed within its physical and historic context. Willowwood is at the crossroads of 2 counties – Morris and Somerset, and of 2 geologic regions – the Highlands and the Piedmont. When the Tubbs brothers purchased this property, much of it was under cultivation or in pasture.

Through their collection and curation, the landscape was transformed into an intimate composite of pleasant woodlands, meadows, and gardens.

Henry Tubbs often counseled visitors to “Study nature’s way. Study the plants which grow naturally in your own countryside. Make notes at all seasons of the trees, shrubs, and other plants whose characteristics you particularly admire.” Once when a visitor inquired as to the identity of WW’s landscape architect, Henry Tubbs replied, “Nature, I’m only the Head Gardener. “

Take the left fork in the road and walk straight ahead to STOP #2 the Stone Barn

Stop #2 Stone Barn

Part of Willowwood’s great charm is the marrying of its many structures to the gardens and landscape. Materials used throughout the property were carefully chosen. The Stone Barn, raised in the early 1800s, is constructed of locally mined Puddingstone. Puddingstone is a conglomerate of round pebbles whose colors contrast sharply with the finer grained, often sandy matrix or cement surrounding them. Here in Northern NJ it is formed of Paleozoic sandstone and quartz conglomerate.

Press #201 to hear about featured plants in this area.

Press #202 to hear about the man for whom this structure is named, or walk directly ahead to Stop #3 - the Red Barn

Stop # 201 Japanese Umbrella Pine - *Sciadopitys verticillata* sp.

Imagine being the only surviving member of your family. Such is the fate of the Japanese Umbrella Pine or *Sciadopitys verticillata*, growing at the right corner of the Stone Barn.

The sole member of the genus *Sciadopitys*, this tree is a living fossil. One of a number of primitive trees here at WW, paleo-botanists have found evidence of this tree’s existence as far back as 230 million years ago.

The Baltic Amber in which insects are preserved and exhibited at natural history museums is from the sap from the Japanese Umbrella Pine.

Press #202 to hear about Russell Myers or walk straight ahead to the Red Barn

Stop #202 - Russell Myers

In 1956, Mr. Russell Myers was appointed as the first Secretary- Director of the Morris County Park Commission, a term he served for more than a quarter of a century. His dynamic leadership established the Morris County Park System as the largest county park system in the State of New Jersey and one of the finest in the nation.

In 1960, he and Dr. Benjamin Blackburn established the Willowwood Foundation to protect this horticultural treasure. He then served as the President of that foundation and as a Trustee of the Tubbs Trust. A graduate of Rutgers University and then the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, Russell Myers was an outstanding leader in the field of conservation. Under his stewardship, Willowwood became one of New Jersey's horticultural treasures.

For information about renting the Stone Barn for your private or corporate event, contact the Morris County Park Commission at 973- 326-7619.

Walk straight ahead to Stop #3, the Red Barn

Stop #3 - Red Barn

This barn was used by the entire Tubbs family, first for carriages, and later for automobiles.

Having visited the property, the Tubbs brothers' parents, Benjamin and Carrie Ladd Tubbs, fell equally in love with both the setting and the dream.

They moved in that first spring along with the boys' sister, Claire, and remained at WW for the rest of their lives. It is likely this barn housed many of their garden tools and today, the barn is still used for storing horticultural tools and supplies.

Press #301 to learn about featured plants in this area or proceed down the curved path to stop #4, the Tubbs Residence

Stop #301

At the back right corner of the barn grows *Trochodendron aralioides*, whose common name, "wheel tree", is derived from its single main trunk on which are carried a whorl of horizontal branches, somewhat like the spokes of a wheel. Planted as single specimen, its distinctive growth habit is eye-catching. This tree grows well in open woodland settings. Come back in June to see its distinctive chartreuse flowers borne in a way that also resembles a wheel.

The fields to the left of the Red Barn are home to Willowwood's impressive Lilac Collection.

The first lilac planted at WW was *Syringa vulgaris* 'Alba,' brought here from the Tubbs family home in Kingston, PA. Now, 61 lilac cultivars flourish on the Arboretum's grounds. The low knoll rising up from the sweeping meadows, which was the farm a century ago, offers the good air movement and soil drainage in which Lilacs thrive. Many of the plants in the collection were gifts from friends or crown offshoots from selected plants in other garden's collections. Some, like the distinctive Peking Tree Lilac, with its shredding and curling bark, have been raised from seeds. Come back from late-April to early June to enjoy their scent. The Willowood Foundation sponsors a Mother's Day event which includes guided tours of the Lilac collection.

Proceed down the curved path to stop #4, the Tubbs Residence

Stop #4 - Tubbs Residence

Originally built in 1783 the Tubbs residence has undergone many alterations. When purchased by the Tubbs brothers in 1908, there was a front porch running along part of the front of the house. The brothers enclosed the porch, adding multiple windows to create a good space for growing indoor plants. They added a kitchen wing and a second floor bedroom for servants, along with front and back dormers to the third floor. Standing at the front door one's eye goes immediately to the beautiful wrought iron gate of the Cottage Garden and onwards to the hillside and a group of trees noted for their seasonal color. With the rear door open, the eye is drawn down the center hall, out the porch, to Pan's garden. With this view, the house is thus integrated into the landscape. Today, the house serves several functions. The third floor is a staff residence. On the second floor there is a library and offices for Park Commission staff and the WW Foundation. The first floor has been preserved as it was when the Tubbs family resided here and features an Entry Hall, Dining Room, Parlor, and Book Room. The interior of the house is open to the public at special events. Check the WW Foundation's website for further information.

Press #401 to learn about featured plants in this area or move to the Conservatory on the left side of the house

Stop #401 - *Quercus Rubra* - Red Oak

The Red Oaks here were planted in 2011 and were chosen to replace Horse Chestnuts. Red Oak, or *Quercus Rubra*, is a structurally sound and durable tree and therefore was a very good choice for plantings so near a residence. The Red Oak is New Jersey's state tree. Oaks are valued for supporting many kinds of wildlife.

Now, walk to the left side of the house to see Stop #5 - the Conservatory

Stop #5 – Conservatory

This Lord and Burnham conservatory was installed by the Tubbs brothers in the 1930's. The Lord and Burnham Company was a noted greenhouse manufacturer and builder of major public conservatories in the United States until its demise in 1988. Peek thru the

windows. Can you see the decorative tiles adorning the wall? These were made by Henry Chapman Mercer at the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in Doylestown, PA. Mercer was an archeologist, architect, collector, tile maker, noted proponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and a friend of the Tubbs brothers. You will see more of his tiles as you tour the gardens.

Press #501 to learn about featured plants in this area or take the gravel path past the Conservatory and take a left up the hill to the Rosarie.

Stop #501 - Conservatory Plants

An eclectic mix of subtropical plants grows in the conservatory - succulents, vines and flowering houseplants. From January to March, you can see a lemon tree among the plants. Ernest Henry Wilson was a famous Victorian British plant explorer who you can hear more about in the second section of this tour. While in China on a plant collecting expedition, he broke his leg and recuperated in the home of a Chinese friend. A type of dwarf Lemon tree, especially well-suited to life in a container grew there. Wilson made some cuttings from those trees and brought them back to America. This tree is a descendant of those cuttings. In summer, it lives under the Oaks.

Take the gravel path past the Conservatory and take a left up the hill to the Rosarie.

Stop # 6 - Rosarie

The Rosarie is not a traditional rose garden, although a number of roses do grow here. Mediterranean plants are featured, including citrus, fig, olive, oleander, agave, yucca, palms and rosemary arranged in large groupings. This Mediterranean style garden was created by Dr. Benjamin Blackburn in the 60's and 70's and features plants with "hot" flower colors and bold foliage. Its design was reminiscent of gardens seen on a trip that he and Henry Tubbs took to southern Europe. A rustic wooden fence encloses the garden. A wisteria arbor and bench provide a quiet place to pause and reflect. The large ceramic jar has been converted into a fountain and serves as a focal point within the garden. A whimsical "door to nowhere" provides a sense of intrigue.

Press #601 to learn more about Dr. Benjamin Blackburn or re-trace your steps to the rear of the Tubbs residence and stand on the covered porch to face Stop #7 – Pan's Garden.

Stop #601 - Dr. Benjamin Blackburn

Sometime around 1935, the Tubbs brothers made the acquaintance of Benjamin Blackburn. Blackburn had recently graduated from Cornell University where he studied Landscape Gardening. In 1936, Rutgers University hired him as an Extension Specialist and appointed him to the faculty of the College of Agriculture where he eventually earned his Doctorate Degree.

In his role as Extension Agent, Blackburn lectured at garden clubs, judged flower shows and was a frequent guest on the WOR Garden Radio Club. Dr. Blackburn became good friends with both brothers and shared their enthusiasm and passion for Willowwood.

In 1946, after serving in the armed forces during WWII, he came to live at Willowwood. Robert Tubbs died in 1942, but Henry's interest in making Willowwood a public arboretum persisted. Dr. Blackburn played a major role in the continuing development of Willowwood, finally becoming executor of the estate upon Henry's death in 1958.

Thru the Tubbs Trust, the property exchanged hands several times, until in 1980, its title was transferred to the Morris County Park Commission. Dr. Blackburn continued to live at Willowwood, working to improve its collections and design. In 1986, the Garden Club of America presented Blackburn its Medal of Honor for his distinguished service to botany and horticulture. The following year he died quietly here at Willowwood.

Re-trace your steps to the rear of the Tubbs residence and stand on the covered porch for Stop #7 Pan's Garden

Stop # 7 - Pans Garden

Built around 1915, Pan's Garden was WW's first pleasure garden. Originally designed so that the inner plantings of perennials and annuals would be interwoven like a Persian rug, Pan's garden has undergone a number of renovations over the years. One design element that has endured is that of a forced perspective. This garden device helps to elongate the view to the statue of Pan, the Greek god of the wild. This was achieved by keeping the flower borders and green path narrower at Pan's end than at the house end and keeping the boxwood taller near the porch than at Pan's end of the garden.

Press #701 to hear about the most recent renovation or walk under the arbor, take the steps down and turn right to Stop #8

Stop #701 – Pan's Garden Renovations

Pan's Garden underwent a renovation in 2001 to improve drainage and also redesign the plantings. Critical plants were bare rooted, washed, and saved. Over the summer, grit was spread and rototilled into the beds, improving the heavy clay soil. The bluestone edging was lifted to grade, aligned, and reset to emphasize the forced perspective. The new garden theme here is "tapestry in white." As the garden has grown shadier over the years from the surrounding tree canopy, white flowers such as *Phlox paniculata* 'Davidii', and Astilbe "Deutschland" pop against the greenery.

Walk under the arbor, take the steps down and turn right to Stop #8

Stop # 8- Wood Walk

The naturalistic streamside path known as Wood Walk creates a unique contrast to both the open meadows and cultivated gardens at Willowwood. This area is characterized

by enclosure, texture, dappled shade, the sound of water and richly layered plants. Dr. Blackburn's love of and familiarity with Asian plants, honed while stationed in Japan during WW II, is especially evident here. The hard scaping as well reflects the Japanese theme, from the bow bridge, constructed with local stone in the Do-Bashi style, to the stone lanterns, which were gifts from friends.

Press #81 to learn more about featured plants in this area or continue walking past the stone Pagoda towards the house to Stop #9 – the Cypress Pool.

Stop #81

The *Rodgersia* growing here is actually from a cutting Dr. Blackburn brought back from Japan. This bold perennial makes a statement with its lovely large foliage and attractive plumes of white flowers. In the wild, this plant grows along streams and pond margins.

In our gardens, this Asian native prefers moist, rich soil and full sun to part shade. Its leaves turn attractive shades of coppery-brown in the fall and their seed heads make for good winter interest.

Now, continue walking past the large stone pagoda to Stop #9 – the Cypress Pool

Stop #9 - Cypress Pool

The Cypress Pool is a fine example of what a good selection of plants and time can create. Texture, shape, color, and water come together here to form a serene environment. The naturalistic and Asian-influenced theme of Wood Walk is continued here.

The pool was constructed of puddingstone circa 1910 by Robert Tubbs to display lotus, but now shade has made lotus culture impossible. Restored in 1985, this area includes a granite signpost known as *michi shi rube* that was hand-carved in China.

Two Japanese maples live happily here - Ornatum, the Brocade Maple, and Waterfall. Both are mutations of *Acer palmatum*, the beautiful, small forest tree of Japan. Waterfall was a chance seedling found along the upper brook by Robert Tubbs in the 1930s. You can purchase *Acer palmatum* "Waterfall" at plant nurseries specializing in Japanese Maples. This tree is a great choice for New Jersey gardens and was designated as a Gold Medal Plant by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1999.

Press 901 to learn about featured plants in this area or continue walking straight until you reach the paved road to stop #10 Dawn Redwood.

Stop #901

If you are visiting in the summer, you cannot miss the very large-leaved petasites, commonly known as butterbur. In the days before refrigerators, its leaves, with their downy undersides, were used to wrap butter. The leaves are still used today as

impromptu sunshades or umbrellas; indeed the name of the [genus](#) *Perasites* is derived from the Greek word *petasos*, a type of hat with a wide brim. Place this plant carefully as it can be an aggressive grower and difficult to eradicate. Spreading can be controlled by planting in a metal or plastic bucket and burying it.

Continue walking straight until you reach the paved road to stop #10 Dawn Redwood.

Stop #10 – Dawn Redwood - *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

The Dawn Redwood is a unique, deciduous conifer. It is easy to grow in NJ. The largest of its kind in the state, this 100' high "Champion" tree is noteworthy for more than its size alone.

In 1950, Willowood received a special gift of three 8" pots containing Dawn Redwoods grown from seeds collected on an Arnold Arboretum plant-collecting expedition to China just a few years before. At that time, *Metasequoia* were thought extinct and were known to science only thru plant fossil records.

Dr. Blackburn called this stately tree the "most exciting introduction of the generation," and nursed the seedlings in a cold frame until they were ready to plant.

Press #110 to learn about the Stone Cottage just to the left or walk thru the ornate metalwork fence to the end of the Cottage Garden and turn right to Stop #12 The Helen Gardiner Propagation Unit

Stop #110 - Stone Cottage

It is thought that the Stone Cottage was constructed in about 1823 by Frederick Hunnell, the owner of this property known at that time as Paradise Farm. It may have been used as living quarters for farm laborers since a large peach orchard was established here. Constructed out of the same locally mined Puddingstone as the Stone Barn, the Stone Cottage's architectural elements are of the Greek Revival period including a symmetrical gable-end front façade and heavy flat arch lintels with large keystones over all the openings. Many renovations, both in the time prior to the Tubbs ownership and during it, have taken place. Most recently, in the 1960's when the porch was reconstructed to its present footprint. In 2005, a Preservation Plan was commissioned by the Park System.

The Stone Cottage remains an important part of the original farmstead and it is significant in that it contributes to the overall character of Willowood.

Walk on along the paved path to the left and Stop #11 – the Cottage Garden

Stop # 11 - Cottage Garden

Flowers and vegetables crowded each other for room when this area was started, as the Tubbs grew mostly vegetables here.

Today, the Cottage Garden is home to an informal assemblage of annuals, perennials, shrubs, small flowering trees and vegetables. Rectangular beds and tall boxwood emphasize the axis from the Tubbs residence front door, across the meadow to the hillside. Planted with various edging and flower favorites, many plants were trialed here before going to more permanent locations. An ancient pear tree stands sentry at the garden's center.

Press #111 to learn about the featured plants in this area or walk thru the ornate metalwork fence to the end of the Cottage Garden and turn right to Stop #12 The Helen Gardiner Propagation Unit.

Stop #111 - Featured plants of the Cottage Garden

Magnolia stellate 'Royal Star' or Star Magnolia, growing here at the garden's entrance, is a native to Japan. This tree was planted in 1962 and has attained its maximum height. The flowering, which takes place in late March or early April, is worth a return visit. The color of its flowers will vary from year to year depending on the day and night temperatures prior to and during flowering. *Magnolia stellata* produces a reddish-green fruit in the fall. As it matures, the fruit opens to reveal crimson seeds.

Magnolias play an important role in Willowwood's history. This from "The Story of Willowwood" by Marta McDowell:

Dr. Blackburn describes the adventurous addition of (Magnolias)

"The next Magnolias planted at Willowwood were Sweetbays, collected as small plants in the New Jersey Pine Barrens in 1912. Henry and Robert Tubbs had taken their parents and sister "down Jersey," for a day's outing in their redoubtable Reo motorcar, and after getting stuck in the loose sand at an innocent appearing but thoroughly treacherous spot near Speedwell, the excursionists had more bad luck in having a flat tire. Finally, with these upsets passed, all were cheered and revived by the contents of the picnic basket, and the horticulturally inclined members of the party dug several plant treasures they had discovered along the small stream with velvety black waters where they had been resting. Small seedling or sucker plants of the abundant Magnolias were carved out in blocks of the moist, peaty soil, and packed in the car with a few Swamp Azaleas and Clethras for the brook edges at Willowwood."

Currently 69 magnolia cultivars flourish at Willowwood. The goal is to showcase the best magnolias for growing in north-central New Jersey.

Walk thru the ornate metalwork fence to the end of the Cottage Garden and turn right to Stop #12 The Helen Gardiner Propagation Unit.

Stop #12 - Helen Gardiner Propagation Unit

In this small propagation unit, more than 8000 seedlings are raised each year. In addition to propagating plants, the Morris County Park Commission staff participate in the Index Seminum, a seed exchange program run by international plant societies and botanic gardens. Through this program, Willowwood distributes exotic and wild-collected New Jersey native plants to institutions throughout the world. The program enables the Morris County Park Commission to broaden its sources for plants of known wild origin to augment its existing collection and helps us to obtain rare and interesting plants for display purposes.

To your left is the Shingle Barn, Stop #13.

Stop #13 - Shingle Barn / Cedar Arbor

Re-shingled in 2008 for Willowwood's centennial celebration, the barn sports a distinctive weathervane. Tools and supplies are stored here and Restrooms are located at the Barn's rear.

Growing in and out of the cedar arbor is *Wisteria floribunda* or Japanese Wisteria. Admired for its hardiness, vigor, and longevity, Wisteria blooms in early May. Wisteria grows vigorously, so be prepared to keep it in the space allotted by pruning, which also promotes flowering. Notable wisteria may also be found on the arbor in the Rosarie, Cottage Garden, and Pan's Garden.

To the right of the shingle barn is the Japanese Wisteria, a small bench, and Stop #14- Conclusion of section 1 of the tour.

Stop #14 – Conclusion

You have come to the end of section 1 of "Where Nature is the Guiding Hand." We hope you have enjoyed this part of the tour. As you sit on this weathered bench, please consider these words of former Director of the Morris County Park Commission, Quentin Schleider.

"There has always been a profound understanding at Willowwood that nature is dynamic.... and so there is a constant metamorphosis of this landscape. Just as many works of art benefit from their patina, so too the landscapes here have matured, growing more beautiful with the passing years. Willowwood is a tribute to Henry and Robert Tubbs love and understanding of the rural landscape, which "took them by the hand" so long ago. "

If you would like to continue the tour to explore the plants of EH Wilson proceed to Stop #15, described in the E. H. Wilson tour.