



OLMSTED
PARKS
CONSERVANCY

NATURE & NEIGHBORHOOD

Winter 2023





**OLMSTED
PARKS**
CONSERVANCY

Save the Dates for these Spring Events!

February 24: Member Hike

February 25: Car Free Cherokee Park

March 23: Member Hike – Birding

March 31: Car Free Cherokee Park

April (date TBA): Chickasaw Park Nature Play Opening

April 1: Free Play, Central Park

April 8: Member Hike – Solar Eclipse, Iroquois Park

April 13: Member Hike – Spring Wildflowers

April 18: 1891 Society Dinner

April 20: Olmsted Parks Conservancy at Tree Fest

April 26: Member Event – A Toast to Olmsted’s Birthday

April 27-28: OPC at the Cherokee Triangle Art Fair

May 11: OPC at the Beechmont Festival of Flowers

May 16: Breakfast for the Olmsted Parks

May 24: Tyler Park Beer Garden

May 26: Car Free Cherokee Park

**Event details will be posted online at
www.olmstedparks.org**

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Cover: A great egret photographed by Jeff Mattingly in Cherokee Park. See the other winning entries in the 2023 Tyler Gerth Memorial Photography Contest on page 4.

Right: Close-up of a fringe tree in Central Park. The fringe tree is one of many native trees that may be perfect for your yard. Read more on page 6.



2023 Tyler Gerth Memorial Photography Contest Winners

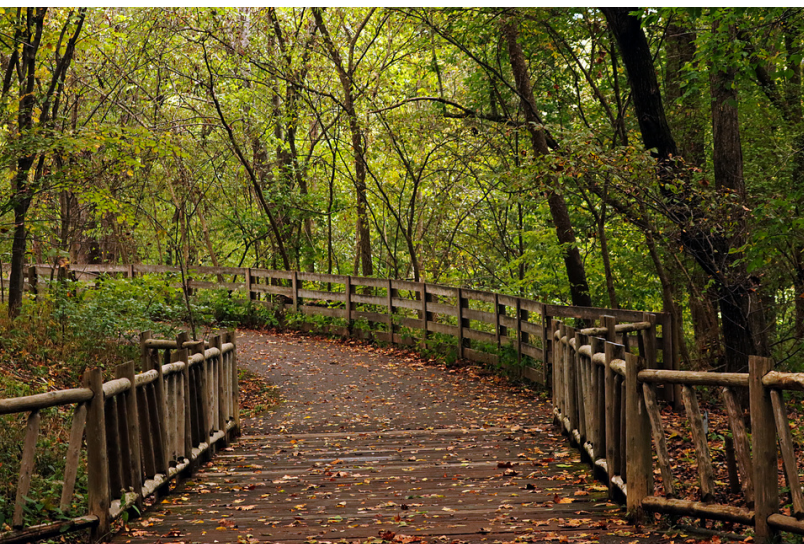
The Building Equal Bridges Foundation and Olmsted Parks Conservancy share the commitment to advocate for a more equitable world. We believe that parks are democratic spaces that foster unity, collaboration and inclusivity.



Above: This year's grand prize winner is Jeff Mattingly, who captured this photo of a great egret in Cherokee Park.

The 2023 Tyler Gerth Memorial Photography Contest honored Tyler Gerth, a gifted young photographer who was tragically killed June 27, 2020 while photographing and supporting the movement for racial justice in Louisville.

This year's winners were selected by a panel of judges including Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Jon Cherry. A photojournalist based in Louisville, Cherry works as a stringer with Getty Images, Thomson Reuters, Bloomberg News, and *The New York Times* and has been published independently by *The New York Times*, *Sierra*, *TIME Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Guardian*, *New York Magazine*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, and others.



From top, left to right:

Tom Barnett

Great blue heron in Cherokee Park

Andy Christ

Box turtle in Cherokee Park

Sherry Kosinar

Bench in Central Park

Buddy Sergesketter

Spiderweb in Iroquois Park

Patty Yaeger

Path in Cherokee Park



CHOOSING THE RIGHT TREE FOR YOUR YARD

Major Waltman
Project Director

Above: Volunteers from LDG Development plant a tree in Shelby Park.

“WHAT TREES SHOULD I PLANT IN MY YARD?”

This is a question that Olmsted Parks Conservancy’s Natural Areas Team hears often, especially considering we spend lots of resources ridding our parks’ natural areas of invasive plants. The main goal of our natural areas management is to increase plant biodiversity, since we know doing so will increase animal diversity, as well. It is the “build it and they will come” approach. If insects, mammals, reptiles, birds, and amphibians are provided with a proper home and food, they will thrive.

Native plants tend to support more biodiversity than alien or non-native plants. This is because plants that develop in a particular region of the world—say, the outer Bluegrass region of Kentucky, where Louisville is located—co-evolve with the animals in their region, which use the plants as food sources and habitat.

In a balanced community, no one member of a food chain dominates the others. However, when a novel plant is introduced to a region, native animals, especially insects, may not use it for a food source, either because they lack the means to overcome the plant’s chemical defenses or because it simply doesn’t taste good to them. If insects cannot thrive on this new, exotic plant, and the plant takes over large areas of the ecosystem, the insect population will decrease. This in turn leads to population declines in species that depend on those insects for food: birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. (Entomologist Doug Tallamy explores this topic in depth in his 2009 book, *Bringing Nature Home*.)

So, to the question of what trees to plant in your backyard. There are many factors that go into this decision, such as the size of your property; the species, age, and

condition of existing trees; desire for open space; and biodiversity goals. If supporting biodiversity is important to you, then consider planting trees like oaks, willows, and cherries, which support many insect herbivores. These trees can become quite large, though, so space is an important consideration in the selection of these species. When considering a location for a new tree, don't forget to look up!

If your space is limited and you would like some attractive flowering understory trees, **redbuds** and **dogwoods** are popular native choices. Other understory selections might include **crabapples**, **hollies**, and **pawpaws**. For mid-size trees, consider **yellowwoods**, **plums**, **chokecherries**, **birches**, and **ironwoods**. These species can achieve greater heights than most understory species but still be dwarfed by some oaks, which can attain heights of 150 to 200 feet.

Oaks host the greatest number of insect species; a mature individual can harbor over 500 species. So, if you have the space and enhancing biodiversity is a goal, oaks are the way to go. However, it is important to plant the right oak—or any tree, for that matter—in the right location. Soil type, moisture, shade, and space limitations are all important factors to consider when choosing a tree species. For example, chestnut oaks prefer acidic soil and full sun, whereas basswoods thrive in partial shade and moist ground. If the underlying rock in your yard is limestone, a chinquapin oak is a great choice.

Winter is a great time to plant trees because many species are dormant during the cold months, so they are less likely to experience transplant shock. Whatever you choose, enjoy your new tree and the wildlife it brings to your home.

These trees have high wildlife value and may be the perfect addition to your backyard:

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)
Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*)
Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)
Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
Basswood (*Tilia americana*)
White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*)
Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*)

Looking for something smaller? Consider these understory trees and shrubs:

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*)
Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)
Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)
Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)
Dogwoods (*Cornus spp.*)
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)
False indigo (*Baptisia australis*)
Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)
Holly (*Ilex spp.*)
Rhododendron spp.
Viburnum spp.



Nature's Neighbors Mistletoe

Matthew London
Natural Areas Technician

Photo © Peggy Lehman via Canva.com.

NESTLED WITHIN THE SCENIC

landscapes of Kentucky, the American mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) emerges as a captivating emblem of nature's intricacies. Beyond its seasonal association with holiday traditions, mistletoe boasts a rich tapestry of natural history, ecological significance, and cultural relevance that extends far beyond its festive reputation.

Latin Name and Etymology

The scientific nomenclature of mistletoe, *Phoradendron leucarpum*, provides insights into its origins and characteristics. *Phoradendron* originates from the Greek words *phor* (thief) and *dendron* (tree), aptly describing mistletoe's semi-parasitic nature. The species epithet,

leucarpum, meaning white berry, may refer to mistletoe's tendency to retain its foliage through the winter months when other deciduous trees have shed theirs.

Growth Habit and Habitat

Mistletoe, a hemiparasitic plant, possesses a growth habit that sets it apart from most of our local flora. Unlike autotrophic plants, which make their own food via photosynthesis, mistletoe have developed specialized "roots" called *haustorium* that penetrate the bark and tissue of a host tree, allowing it to draw water and nutrients from its host. *P. leucarpum* demonstrates a particular affinity for deciduous trees, often growing on walnut, elm, or oak, forming distinctive spherical clusters in the

branches that can be seen as soon as the trees drop their leaves for the season. The plant is highly adaptable and is not limited to the tree species above.

The growth process of mistletoe is a fascinating dance of nature. First, tiny, inconspicuous flowers emerge, attracting pollinators such as bees and wasps. Fertilized flowers develop into small berries that hold the plant's seeds. Birds disperse the seeds by eating the berries, which pass through their digestive systems and find new homes on the branches of a potential host. The fleshy portion of the berry is extremely sticky, helping the seed to germinate high in a tree's canopy, where the process begins anew. This intricate cycle of mistletoe propagation contributes to the plant's ability to persist and thrive in the ecosystems of Kentucky.

Cultural Relevance

While mistletoe is often associated with holiday traditions, its cultural significance transcends festive decorations. Across different cultures and historical periods, mistletoe has held diverse symbolic meanings. In ancient Druidic traditions, mistletoe was a symbol of fertility, life, and protection. Norse mythology recounts mistletoe as a plant associated with love and peace, leading to the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe during the holiday season.

Other Mistletoe Species

Beyond *P. leucarpum*, various mistletoe species inhabit different regions worldwide. There are over 1,500 distinct species of mistletoe, varying in toxicity to humans. Each species exhibits unique characteristics and interacts with distinct host trees. For example, *Viscum album*, commonly known as European mistletoe, thrives in European deciduous forests and has cultural significance like its North American counterpart.



Photo: Michael Viard vis Canva.com



Photo: [Gueholl](#) from [Getty Images Signature](#)

Distribution in Kentucky

While *Phoradendron leucarpum* is the predominant mistletoe species in Kentucky, the distribution of mistletoe species can vary across the state's diverse ecosystems. Mistletoe is commonly found in woodlands, forests, and even urban areas where suitable host trees are present. Understanding the distribution of mistletoe species in Kentucky is crucial for conservation efforts and maintaining the ecological balance within different regions of the state.

The mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) in Kentucky embodies more than a festive ornament. It serves as a botanical ambassador, connecting us to the intricate dance of nature, cultural traditions, and the importance of biodiverse ecosystems. As we appreciate its presence during the holiday season, let us also recognize the broader role mistletoe plays in sustaining the rich tapestry of Kentucky's natural heritage. Whether it's the enchanting growth process or the varied cultural symbolism, mistletoe invites us to delve deeper into the secrets of the natural world right in our own backyards.



Meet the Team



Jesse Hendrix-Inman

Director of Communications

***On Staff Since:* August 2021**

***Favorite Olmsted Park:* Chickasaw**

***Hobbies:* Photography and hiking**

Jesse is the person behind Olmsted Parks Conservancy's social media, website, and other communications. Additionally, she writes grant proposals to secure funding for park projects. She is also the Conservancy's resident photographer and can often be found in the parks capturing images of everything from spring wildflowers to prescribed burns (as in the picture above). Jesse's favorite part of her job is photographing the parks throughout the seasons, since she can always find something new to appreciate, even on cold, gray, or rainy days. "I think more people should experience that side of the parks," she says. "There's no bad weather, only the wrong clothing!"



The 7 S's of Olmstedian Design

Matt Spalding

Director of Stewardship

A pastoral view in Shawnee Park.

Photo: Jesse Hendrix-Inman

TOWARD THE END OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS career, famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted helped design five parks in Louisville, Kentucky: Cherokee, Shawnee, Iroquois, Baxter Square and Boone Square. Olmsted's firm, led by his sons, designed another twelve parks across the city. But what makes a park with the Olmsted fingerprints so special? Why do they seem timeless more than a century later? What makes a park "Olmstedian?"

Olmsted saw himself as an artist, creating spaces to serve humankind and uplift civilization. He saw his parks as democratizing spaces and a way to elevate our cities. At Olmsted Parks Conservancy, a guiding principle in our work is to ask, *What would Olmsted do?* It's difficult to imagine what his thoughts would be on parking lots, pickleball, or ADA guidelines. However, we have many old letters, maps

and other historic documentation that can serve as a starting point.

Olmsted scholar Charles Beveridge has identified seven design tenets present in nearly all of Olmsted's public spaces, which he calls the Seven S's. These tenets provide helpful guidance to us today as we try to blend past intent, modern needs, and future uses for the parks under our care.

Scenery

This is the first S for a reason – it is arguably the most important. Nearly all of Olmsted's designs sought to elevate the beauty of the natural world around us. In making large parks, he would attempt to make the boundaries seem endless through open spaces bordered by distant woodlands. The parks seem to go on forever. New views open up constantly as one travels through the space.

Suitability

The idea of using the existing topography and natural features to help give a park space its character and beauty might seem instinctive. Olmsted worked as a surveyor early in his life, and utilizing the contours and elevation of a given space to his advantage was front of mind. In Louisville, he was pleased to get the opportunity to design three large parks, each differing in character and topography: Shawnee with its river vistas, Iroquois with its rugged hillsides and ravines, and Cherokee with its rolling slopes.

Style

Olmsted applied two main styles to his park spaces: pastoral and picturesque. The *pastoral* style was very open, with green pasture, large shade trees and a sense of spacing. The *picturesque* style was denser, with more plants and textures. As you move through Olmsted's landscapes, you might wander from the pastoral into the picturesque and then back out again. These transitions allowed for a lot of playful manipulation of light, shadows and views throughout.

Subordination

This is the idea of a unified vision for a space. Much like landscape paintings, Olmsted's works were intended to be taken as a whole, with all the parts informing the main effect and composition. He disliked decorative ornamentation or garish manmade structures that might detract from the primary goal of scenic retreat. This is perhaps the most subtle of the 7 S's and

speaks to Olmsted's amazing ability to make a site seem like it's always been there, or that it grew that way naturally, when in actuality its creation involved a lot of forethought and design.

Separation

Long before we had transportation buzzwords like "multi-modal," Olmsted saw a need to separate carriage roads from hiking paths. Parkways utilize linear tree plantings to achieve this, but this intentional separation also occurs in many of our parks. Separating different uses like picnicking, fishing, riding, walking, and active recreation served to make each safer, less distracting and more enjoyable.

Sanitation

Olmsted appreciated water and tried to include it in most of his large landscapes, but his years as head of the US Sanitary Commission during the Civil War helped inform the idea that stagnant water was unsafe for the public. For this reason, creating drainages and movement of water was of utmost importance. His preliminary survey work always helped inform how water was managed on site.

Service

Olmsted wanted all of the elements of his designs to serve the greater good. This lofty vision meant everything in a park should serve some purpose – beautiful views, tranquil paths, unique features should all have a reason for existing in an Olmsted designed space.

Want to learn more about the 7 S's? Visit the Olmsted Network at www.olmsted.org.

Owl

Order Strigiformes



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OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY

Olmsted Parks Conservancy's mission is to restore, enhance and forever protect Louisville's Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, connecting nature and neighborhood while strengthening the community's well-being.

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