

THE SENSORY GARDEN AT PLANTING FIELDS ARBORETUM

VINCENT SIMEONE

Written by Ronnie Brancazio

On Sunday, June 25th LIHS members and guests came together for the last meeting of the spring season, and what a wonderful occasion it was! We had a large turnout, there was much to see, hear, learn about and discuss, and all enjoyed connecting with new and old friends and chatting about their gardens and summer plans.

The highlight of the event, unquestionably, was the presentation by Vincent Simeone on the topic of "*The Sensory Garden at Planting Fields Arboretum*".



Vincent has worked at PFA for the past 31 years, and he is currently the Director. His talk and accompanying slide show focused on the Sensory Garden, but he also presented a lot of fascinating information about the history, grounds and exhibition areas, and ongoing projects at the Arboretum. The main objectives in planning the Sensory Garden were: "*Accessibility, Function and Sustainability*", and Vincent showed us the stages of development of the Garden, from a rotted out root cellar, through almost two years of hard work, to the current,

beautifully designed area which can engage the senses of any visitor, regardless of their special needs.

He described the intensive efforts to source the most substantial, durable materials; discussed the plant materials selected based on their sensory properties, hardiness, and value to pollinators and other wildlife; and illustrated the stages of development and the completed garden..



Vincent also brought us up-to-date on the restoration and modification of the Visitor Parking Lot, and explained the massive re-planting of the Entrance Drive. In the former case, the Lot was repaved with materials that allow drainage of excessive amounts of rainwater, and the lighting was replaced with more attractive, efficient lampposts. In the latter situation, the former allee of beach trees were succumbing to "beech leaf disease" and they were not native to this area. They have been removed and replaced with two varieties of native white oaks to create a layered effect, and this is being under-planted with seeds for a "No Mow" lawn!

There were many questions from the audience about specific plants and plans for different areas of PFA, and Vincent answered all in his thorough, lively, and informative way.

To complete this wonderful presentation, Vincent invited members of the audience to join him for a walking tour of the Sensory Garden, and that was greatly enjoyed by all those who participated.