From the Director

One hundred forty years ago, the trustees overseeing the will of whaling merchant James Arnold established an arboretum in his name. This living collection in the heart of Boston would “contain, as far as practicable, all the trees [and] shrubs... either indigenous or exotic, which can be raised in the open air.” Scarcely more than a decade had elapsed since the appearance of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, a revolutionary work professing that life’s abundant diversity arose through descent with modification through a branching pattern of evolution. In amassing a collection of plants from around the world and growing similar species side by side for comparative study, the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University developed into one of the foremost centers for understanding the breadth and beauty of this diversity, and its importance to humankind.

As we confront serious challenges arising from a rapidly changing global climate, the need to investigate and protect the full complexity of life on this planet has never been more critical. The shape of our collective future will rely heavily on the ability of science to steer us toward innovative and credible solutions to the problems that we ourselves have wrought. In this issue of *Silva*, Director of Research Facilitation Dr. Faye Rosin discusses our efforts to contribute to this potential through programs that support the training and work of emerging plant scientists. Endowed through the generosity of friends both past and present, our fellowship and awards opportunities share in common one important requirement—that studies draw on the unique strengths and utility of the Arboretum’s living collections.

In these pages you will also learn how many of our more than 15,000 curated plants are playing an integral part in groundbreaking studies in fields from phenology—tracking the timing of key events in the annual cycles of plants—to DNA technologies that allow us to discover the microbial communities that live in and upon the surfaces of whole trees. If inviting scholars to investigate the remarkable set of living organisms in our landscape holds great value to us as part of Harvard University, sharing them freely and thoughtfully with the public galvanizes our complementary role as a community resource. On this front, I invite you to join our new “Tree Mobs™” that spotlight individual plants and projects in our landscape, and to try out new mobile applications that help you explore the Arboretum on your own, right from your smart phone or tablet device.

This fall and winter, we offer multiple avenues for you to enhance your connection to the Arboretum and discover the plants, programs, and people that make it such an extraordinary place. On September 15, I hope you’ll join us beneath our majestic specimens of walnut and hickory at our Members’ Plant Giveaway; our annual opportunity to extend our thanks and offer a token of some of the amazing plants that we steward for your own backyard.

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