Interview Transcript 9/8/21

Ember: What is the history of the BeFriend a Tree Sale? When did it start? Who started it?

Carolyn: The idea for a new fundraiser was started by me three years ago after a hurricane came through. Fall through winter is the best time to plant trees, and we wanted to provide trees for Wilmington hurricane relief.

E: Wow, I didn’t know that this came out of a hurricane. It’s great that you came up with an idea to help the community! When does it start?

C: The sale starts on September 10th, and it runs through October 10th.

E: How does the Tree Sale operate?

C: There is a tree sale committee made of seven volunteers. Everyone has a hand in everything; there are planting instructions with each tree, the trees need to be delivered, the trees are hand selected, and pictures of the trees are taken to promote them to the community.

E: Is there anything special happening this year?

C: The first year was modest. There wasn’t much promoting, and we had just had a hurricane. We only sold native trees that year. Last year, we sold native, fruit trees, and some exotic plants. This year, we are branching out more with some native and fruit trees, each different from the previous years. We are also selling shrubs and bushes. Espalier plants will also be included­—they are plants that need to be trained to grow against a wall. There will also be surprises throughout the sale!

E: I’m surprised at the number of plants you will be providing! Is there anything else you would like to add to our conversation that you feel we haven’t touched on?

C: Can I tell you about some of the trees this year so you can have more information on them?

E: Sure! I’d love to hear about them.

C: Our fruit plants this year are blueberries and pecan trees. Our native trees are redbud, and our espaliers are the sasanqua and vitex sipside—hey are burgundy on the bottom and gray on the top, and they have these beautiful blue flowers.

Also, I forgot to mention that Friends of the Arboretum get a reduced price on the trees plus free delivery. Non-members have a different price, and they have to pay for delivery.

E: Thank you for letting me know! And the free delivery and reduced price sounds like a good incentive for becoming a Friend of the Arboretum. Speaking of which, is this at all connected to Friends Day?

C: Not quite, but I can tell you about it! This is our first year trying Friends Day, but it will look different than what we imagined because of a lack of interest. The idea was that, since members have an annual meeting to talk about how the year went as required by non-profit organizations, why not make it open to the community? We could have fun at the Arboretum. We were thinking of bringing in a food truck and have clubs associated with the Arboretum, like the Japanese Garden Club, set up booths for selling and promoting. This event would help share and promote the Arboretum with the community. Now, it’s virtual. The annual members meeting is now over Zoom. We are having a speaker, Amy Renfranz from the sewer water district, share what a bog community is. It’s like a wetland—there are green swamps and black swamps. She worked on the Blue Ridge Parkway, so she will also talk about mountain bogs versus coastal bogs.

E: When will the meeting and presentation be?

C: The meeting starts on Sunday, September 26th at 3:30, and the presentation starts at 4:30.

E: Thank you so much! I appreciate talking to you.

C: Yes! Thank you for having me.