

# **Arlington National Cemetery Strategic Plan for the Memorial Arboretum**

## **I. Introduction:**

The Memorial Arboretum at Arlington National Cemetery was established in 2014 to commemorate the cemetery's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The cemetery has long been recognized as a place of beauty, with the trees and plantings contributing greatly to the overall character and iconic image of the cemetery as one of the Nation's most sacred places.

While the primary mission of the cemetery is to inter the nation's veterans with honor and dignity and to maintain the grounds as a National Shrine, the cemetery recognizes that the trees and gardens are valuable cultural, historic and natural resources.

The cemetery's guiding principles of Honor-Remember-Explore exemplify a commitment to Honoring veterans, Remembering the history, and enhancing the visitor experience to Explore the cemetery. The Memorial Arboretum touches on all three of these guiding principles.

What started as a concept to recognize and highlight the majestic trees and awe-inspiring grounds of the cemetery by the creation of an arboretum was solidified following a presentation given by the cemetery Horticulture Division Chief to the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery in September 2012. The committee made a unanimous recommendation to the Secretary of the Army that the cemetery pursue the implementation of the establishment of the arboretum in conjunction with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cemetery in 2014. The Secretary of the Army fully endorsed the recommendation and directed that efforts be made to achieve arboretum status by the cemetery's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The development and establishment of the arboretum at Arlington National Cemetery aligns with the cemetery's Real Property Master Plan, Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan as well as the cemetery's National Register of Historic Places designation.

Since the fall of 2012, the Horticulture Division staff has taken enormous strides in the development of the Memorial Arboretum. This Strategic Plan for the Memorial Arboretum outlines the purpose of the arboretum, identifies the audience, describes the types of plants and trees that make up the collections, and provides provisions for the maintenance and care of the plants. Most importantly, this Plan details the future goals and objectives for the arboretum.

## **II. Arlington National Cemetery:**

### **Mission:**

*On behalf of the American people, lay to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion, and connecting guests to the rich tapestry of the cemetery's living history, while maintaining these*

*hallowed grounds befitting the sacrifice of all those who rest here in quiet repose.*

**Purpose:**

Arlington National Cemetery is a national cemetery under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army. The primary mission of Arlington National Cemetery is to function as the nation's premier military cemetery and national shrine, honoring those men and women who served in the Armed Forces. The cemetery conducts between 27 and 30 funeral services each day. In addition, more than 3,000 additional ceremonies are held annually, including visits from the President of the United States or other senior government officials on Memorial and Veteran's Day, as well as visiting heads of states and dignitaries from around the world. Approximately three million people visit the cemetery annually.

**III. Memorial Arboretum:**

**Mission:**

*The grounds of Arlington National Cemetery honor those who have served our nation by providing a sense of beauty and peace. The purpose of the Memorial Arboretum at Arlington National Cemetery is to preserve and interpret the collection of trees and ornamental plants that serve as a backdrop to this National Shrine. The Arboretum connects visitors to the rich tapestry of the cemetery's living history and natural beauty. Arlington National Cemetery promotes sustainable landscaping in the design and maintenance of these Hallowed Grounds.*

**Purpose:**

The establishment of the Memorial Arboretum solidifies ANC's commitment to the preservation of the natural and cultural landscape resources of the cemetery. The collections of trees and shrubs are valuable resources at the cemetery. The arboretum enhances the visitor experience by maintaining the arboretum collections and interpreting the natural history of the cemetery. Public programs, tours and events highlight the horticulture program and the cemetery's dedication to promote sustainability.

**IV. Brief History:**

Arlington National Cemetery is comprised of land that once belonged to George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of Martha Washington and adopted son of George Washington. In 1857, Custis willed the 1,100-acre property to his only surviving daughter Mary Anna Randolph Custis, who was married to Robert E. Lee. After the Lee family vacated the estate in 1861 at the onset of the Civil War, federal troops occupied the property as a camp and headquarters. In 1863, the government established Freedman's Village on a portion of the estate as a way to assist slaves transitioning to freedom. The village provided housing, education, training, and medical care.

As the number of Civil War casualties was outpacing other local Washington, D.C.-based

cemeteries, the property became a burial location. The first military burial took place on May 13, 1864, for Private William Christman. On June 15, the War Department officially set aside approximately 200 acres of the property to use as a cemetery. By the end of the war, thousands of service members and former slaves were buried here. Ultimately, the Lee family was compensated for the property and the land remained with the War Department.

Arlington National Cemetery has evolved from a place of necessity to a national shrine to those who have honorably served our Nation during times of war – including every military conflict in American history – and during times of peace. The cemetery is the final resting place for more than 400,000 active duty service members, veterans and their families. “Service to country” is the common thread that binds all who are honored and remembered here.

#### **V. Audience:**

The audience of the cemetery has many facets. The grounds, trees and landscapes that make up the arboretum collections provide the setting for everything that occurs at the cemetery. The primary audiences of the cemetery are the families, friends and loved ones of the veterans and eligible dependents laid to rest on the hallowed grounds. On average, 27 funerals occur every day. The primary mission of the Horticulture Division is to ensure that the grounds, trees and landscape honor the sacrifices and service of every veteran interred here.

Approximately 3,000 ceremonies occur at the cemetery annually. These include wreath laying ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknowns as well as other memorial ceremonies and dedications held throughout the cemetery. Every Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day the cemetery hosts remembrance ceremonies attended by a Senior Government Official, usually the President of the United States.

Dignitaries from nations around the world, including heads of state, visit the cemetery regularly. Many lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, visit the Kennedy gravesites, or visit section 60 where casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan are buried.

The cemetery is a major tourist destination in the National Capital Region. Over 3 million people come to the cemetery every year to pay their respects. The cemetery is open to the public 365 days a year and there is no admission fee. Visitors can pay for a guided tram tour or choose to walk and explore the grounds. The cemetery conducts tours throughout the year and visitors can hire licensed tour guides privately.

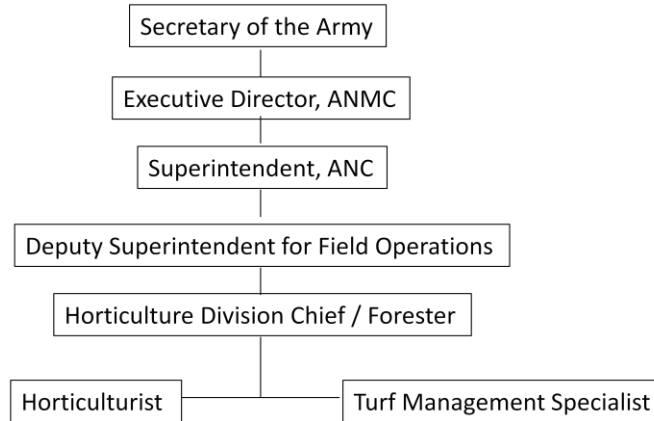
With the establishment of the Memorial Arboretum, ANC has expanded its audience to include visitors that are specifically interested in the trees, gardens and landscapes at the cemetery.

#### **V. Organizational Staffing and Roles:**

The Memorial Arboretum is managed by the Horticulture Division of ANC. The Horticulture Division staff is responsible for the management and maintenance of the grounds, turf, trees and gardens at the cemetery. The establishment of the Memorial Arboretum and the development of the programs associated with it have been additional duties performed by the existing

Horticulture Division staff.

The Horticulture staff is comprised of the Supervisory Horticulturist who serves as the Division Chief as well as the Urban Forester and reports to the Deputy Superintendent of Field Operations. The other two positions within the division are Horticulturist and Turf Management Agronomist.



Organizational Chart

The Public Affairs Office (PAO) and GIS Branch have been major contributors to the development of the arboretum. The PAO assists with maintaining and updating information on the ANC and Memorial Arboretum website, coordinating and promoting events and tours, and any media relations. The GIS Branch assists with maintaining and updating the geospatial data for the mapping of the trees and plants in the collections, as well as integrating information about the collections into the ANC Explorer Application.

## VI. Collections:

The Memorial Arboretum *Living Collections Policy* outlines the strategies for the enhancement, development and sustainment of the collections. A more in depth description of the collections is provided in the *Collections Summary*. The types of plants that the arboretum focuses on are primarily native and ornamental plantings that maintain the “Iconic Image” of the cemetery and enhance the Notable Tree Collections.

## VII. Maintenance of Living Collections:

The Horticulture Division is responsible for the maintenance of the plants and all grounds, landscape and tree care at the cemetery. A comprehensive Cemetery Grounds Management Plan (CGMP) was completed in 2012 that describes the operational activities required to maintain the trees, shrubs, gardens and turf at the cemetery.

The establishment of the arboretum has not changed the plant, grounds or landscape maintenance programs, but has created a vehicle to highlight to the public the horticultural, arboricultural and turf management programs that the cemetery has developed.

### **VIII. Horticulture Division Background:**

The following are aspects of the Horticulture program that reflect how the cemetery has informally functioned as an arboretum and public garden for many years:

1. Notable Trees: Over the history of the cemetery, many trees were planted and dedicated by visiting dignitaries, family members, organizations and even presidents. Several trees of unique provenance have been planted over the years as well. These and other notable trees make up the core of the collections.

2. Tree and Shrub Inventory: A comprehensive inventory and mapping of the cemetery trees was conducted in 1959-1960 by US Army botanist Jack R. McMillen. A digitized inventory using a Microsoft Access database and GIS data was completed in 2001 and has been maintained and updated since.

3. Events: The cemetery has hosted several events that have focused on the care of the trees or landscapes. The most notable was a day of service held in 1993 by the National Arborist Association (now TCIA). Hundreds of arborists and tree workers from around the country provided service by pruning and caring for the trees.

In 2007 the cemetery hosted a Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) event that included a reception and tour of the cemetery grounds, gardens and tree programs.

In July of 2014 the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) Renewal and Remembrance day of service was held. Over 400 volunteers from the Green Industry provide a day of service including tree cabling and lightning protection installation and plantings. Since 2007, a Children's Program has been incorporated into the Renewal and Remembrance event that offers the opportunity for children to plant flowers, tree saplings or plants, place flowers on gravesites and learn about the history and mission of the cemetery.

4. Tours: The ANC Horticulture Division has hosted tours for various organizations and agencies including: The American Boxwood Society, Smithsonian Institution Horticulture, Hillwood Museum and Gardens, Baltimore City Parks Department, and Bellevue Forest Garden Club.

5. Professional Staff: Since the early 1980's, the cemetery has had an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist on staff. The current Horticulturist and Supervisory Horticulturist have previous experience working at public gardens (Hillwood Estate and Gardens and Smithsonian Institution). The Supervisory Horticulturist is also an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist.

6. Collaboration and Partnerships: The cemetery is proud to have partnered with several agencies and organizations on various projects. These have included allowing The Potomac Conservancy and American Forests to collect seed at the cemetery. The cemetery participated in the USDA APHIS Emerald Ash Borer trapping and monitoring program by allowing traps to be set in the cemetery. The American Chestnut Foundation dedicated a planting of a Dutch Elm Disease resistant hybrid at the cemetery. American Forests collaborated with the cemetery to replace the ‘Arlington Oak’ that was felled by hurricane Irene with saplings that were grown from acorns collected from the tree. The cemetery is currently collaborating with the US National Arboretum, National Turfgrass Council and the National Park Service on establishing a National Greenscape Corridor that highlights the significance of green spaces in the National Capital Region.

7. Sustainability: The Horticulture Division has been instrumental in the cemetery’s sustainability initiatives. These have included the design and installation of rain gardens, utilizing drought tolerant plants and water-wise designs, planting of resistant cultivars, and increasing plant diversity.

## **IX. Establishment of the Memorial Arboretum:**

The creation and establishment of the Memorial Arboretum has been a natural and logical progression. The following are the major accomplishments and milestones achieved since 2012:

1. Designation of the Memorial Arboretum. The establishment of the arboretum is solidified in the recommendation from the Advisory Committee on ANC and by the directive signed by the Secretary of the Army. The name “Memorial Arboretum” was chosen to reflect the main purpose and vision of the arboretum to serve as a living memorial. Additionally, the name echoes and resonates with the Memorial Amphitheater.

2. Registration with the Morton Register of Arboreta. The self registration of ANC in the Register affirms the Memorial Arboretum’s standing amongst other arboreta and public gardens. Arlington cemetery is honored to join the leading public gardens in the commitment to the preservation and conservation of trees and plants.

3. Creation of the Horticulture and Memorial Arboretum Website. The Horticulture Division established its own pages within the main ANC website with links to information on the collections, tours and updated images. The cemetery has successfully promoted the Memorial Arboretum through public messaging. The cemetery effectively used social media such as Twitter, Flickr and Facebook to promote the arboretum.

4. Plant Labels. A label layout was designed by the Horticulture Division and nearly 300 labels were purchased and installed on select trees and shrubs throughout the cemetery. The cemetery has received many positive comments about the labels and how they enhance the visitor experience.

5. Seasonal Walking Tours. The Horticulture Division developed a very popular Walking

Tour program. In 2011, the cemetery started guided walking tours led by the Horticulture Division Chief. This tour focuses on the trees and an overview of the entire horticulture program. Each year since, additional tours have been added including a Sustainable Landscape tour and a tour of the Cemetery Gardens. A Turf Management tour was conducted in 2014.

6. Plant Records and Inventory. The cemetery has had a GIS based Tree and Shrub inventory since 2001. Over the last two years, the cemetery GIS Branch has assisted in updating the geospatial data for the trees. A separate database for herbaceous plants has also been created.

7. Arbor Day Events. The cemetery has held an Arbor Day event since 2011. A public tour that focuses on the trees and arboricultural program at the cemetery is held, followed by a ceremonial tree planting and dedication.

8. Living Collections Policy. In 2015, the *Living Collections Policy* for the arboretum was written and approved by the Horticulture Division to identify and categorize the living collections. The policy also describes the management of the plants, acquisition criteria and the inventory process.

## **X. Future Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

1. Arboretum Accreditation: Since the concept of the arboretum was first envisioned, it has been a goal to achieve the Arb.Net Level II Accreditation.

### *Strategy:*

The application for accreditation will be submitted in March, 2015.

2. Strengthen the Arboretum Identity: Promote and communicate the arboretum's mission and purpose through increased public awareness, social media and outreach programs.

### *Strategies:*

Continue to develop and maintain a Web presence that highlights the arboretum, and information about the trees, plants and collections.

Keep the website fresh, engaging and inviting by providing updated photos, articles and tour schedules.

Increase use of social media.

Increase access to the arboretum collection information by leveraging existing ANC Explorer App to develop a virtual tour of the trees and plants at the cemetery.

Investigate development of a public outreach program for children that is similar to the PLANET Children's Program.

Continue holding the Arbor Day event and investigate ways to expand and improve the event by incorporating demonstrations or presentations.

3. Enhance the Visitor Experience: Establish interpretive materials that tell the stories of the cemetery trees and landscapes.

### *Strategies:*

Continue and possibly expand the Horticulture Walking tours. Investigate integrating with

the new Arlington National Cemetery Tours to include information about the arboretum. Army Regulations restrict the cemeteries ability to provide transportation to the public (this is why walking tours are conducted).

Increase the number of trees that are labeled, based on the *Living Collections Policy*.

Investigate the development of interpretive materials for the Welcome Center that highlight the arboretum collections as well as the natural and landscape history of the cemetery.

Investigate additional interpretive signage, similar to the Sustainable Landscape sign placed at the Niche Wall.

4. Sustainability: Initiate and incorporate sustainable landscape practices, principles and designs that aim to lessen the amount of resources required to perform operations and have less impacts to the environment.

*Strategies:*

Investigate incorporating Best Management Practices for storm water management such as rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and bio-swales into existing and future landscape plans.

Evaluate future landscape designs for the selection of drought and heat tolerant plants.

Increase the diversity of plantings and consider benefits to wildlife, beneficial insects and resistance to diseases and insect pests in plant selections.

5. Collaborations and Partnerships. Expand existing and establish new collaborative efforts that are aligned with the mission and goals of the arboretum at ANC. Increase networking with other public gardens and organizations with a focus on the preservation and conservation of trees and plants.

*Strategies:*

Participate in the ArbNet community.

Engage with American Public Garden Association (APGA) member gardens and arboreta- especially other cemeteries.

Participation in the International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference in 2017 (The Mid-Atlantic Chapter has already inquired about the cemetery being a site for the conference tour program).

6. Research Tree and Landscape History: Research, document and interpret the history of the living collections and landscapes of the cemetery.

*Strategies:*

Review and analyze existing documents and files and historic photographs and document information relevant to the tree collections.

Develop materials that interpret the history of the living collections.

Update tree and plant records.

7. Plant Records and GIS: Maintain and enhance tree and shrub inventory records and GIS mapping.

*Strategies:*



Complete tree mapping and inventory updates.  
Update mapping and information for shrubs.

## **XI. Conclusion:**

This strategic plan is designed to establish a framework that assists in decision making and guides the course of arboretum. The plan assumes that the ANC Horticulture Division staffing levels and resources remain the same as current levels. Nearly all of the goals are ongoing, such as the maintaining of the plant records, research of tree history and development of outreach programs. The cemetery will review this strategic plan annually to assess progress and achievements.