

## SAVE THE DATE

**BLOSSOM DAY, SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2025**

*"Harlan Page Kelsey, descendant of William Kelsey, a 1st settler of Cambridge MA"*

**CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE HARLAN P. KELSEY ARBORETUM!**



This year, we celebrate several legacies. In 2000, Loren and Sally Wood had the foresight to donate and create a Conservation Restriction on 4.2 acres of Harlan P. Kelsey's original Boxford Nursery on Kelsey Road, known as the Harlan P. Kelsey Arboretum. That same year, the non-profit organization Horticultural Society of Boxford was deeded that Conservation Restriction to preserve and conserve Mr. Kelsey's original 100+ year-old plantings and trees in a natural environment. We celebrate the endurance of the land, its plantings and its natural environment as a free public oasis for enjoyment and education. Last, but not least, we celebrate the man, Harlan Page Kelsey - and his visions.

### Harlan Page Kelsey – From Beginnings to Boxford

Harlan Kelsey was not your typical resident who moved to Boxford to grow and sell plants. It began in 1632 when his 6<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather, William Kelsey, and several families fled England's religious persecution to settle Cambridge in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1636, William and those same families ventured west and founded Hartford CT. Several years later William was granted land along Long Island Sound to settle another town, Clinton CT. As the Kelsey generations grew, they moved west for new farmland. Harlan's great-grandfather created the first apple orchard in NY in Great Valley with Johnny Appleseed's seeds. His grandfather expanded the orchard, but concerned about conserving the natural environment, began buying virgin forest land to "save the trees from the new settlers axes". Harlan's Dad, Samuel, managed the orchard while learning horticulture and landscaping. As the southwest opened, the Santa Fe Railroad hired Samuel to plant trees along their Kansas RR lines and settle the town of Ottawa KS, where he helped create the University of Ottawa. Samuel met a missionary's daughter, married and had four children, with Harlan and his twin brother Harry, the youngest, born in 1872. When malaria hit, Samuel moved his family to North Carolina and co-founded the town of Highlands, NC in the Smoky Mts.

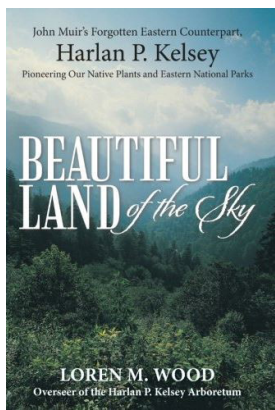


There, Samuel gave teenage Harlan land for a nursery of "native" rhododendrons and azaleas, which he transplanted from the mountains – the first Highlands Nursery. Harlan's horticultural and environmental education came from renowned botanists who came to the area for scientific study and research. Confused by the different names these botanists gave to the same plant, he wrote his first book, *"Standardized Plant Names"*, revisions of which became standard for all plant growers, even today.

His growing nursery of “native plants” and his landscape architecture expertise caught the eye of wealthy clients all along the eastern seaboard. A northern nursery was needed. Salem, MA was selected, but he soon outgrew this nursery. Looking for another area, he learned of several farms for sale in Boxford. Now married (Florence Low) with four children, the move was made. His new Boxford Highlands Nursery along Georgetown, Ipswich and Kelsey Roads opened in 1928 and grew to 500 acres in the 1930’s, including an airstrip in Cadet Field. Being a nurseryman was



not enough for Harlan. In his landscape architecture work, he saw the natural environment being ravaged by development. He was determined to conserve land in its natural state wherever he could. Thus, he led the extension and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail and was instrumental in the creation of the National Park Service through which he had designated the Shenandoah, Smoky Mts., Everglades, Monmouth Caves, and White Mts. as National Parks. After a devastating fire in Salem, he bought Derby Wharf, which he restored and had designated as America’s very first National Historic Site. For Salem’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he helped build Pioneer Village, donating trees from his Boxford nursery. Harlan died in 1958. Amid these and other accomplishments, he took little publicity, feeling it his duty to respect God’s world and be involved in keeping it beautiful. Looking back today, he would be pleased to know that many people visit and enjoy the national parks. His legacy gift to Boxford is the preservation of his last nursery acreage, the Harlan P. Kelsey Arboretum, for all to visit, learn about and enjoy.



For additional details of Harlan Kelsey’s life, see “*Beautiful Land of the Sky*” by Loren M. Wood.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**MAY 1 - BOXFORD EARTH DAY, 10am - 3pm, Town Hall**

**MAY 17 – VOLUNTEER WORK DAY, 9am – noon, Kelsey Arboretum, 18 Kelsey Rd.**

**MAY 31 – BLOSSOM DAY - TOURS, 1pm - 4pm, Kelsey Arboretum, 18 Kelsey Rd.**

**MAY 31 – DEDICATE EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT – SMOKY MT. REST, Kelsey Arboretum**

**SEPT. 20 – BOXFORD APPLE FESTIVAL, 10am -3pm, East Boxford**

**SEPT. 23 – TRAILS & SAILS DAY TOURS, 1-4pm, Kelsey Arboretum, 18 Kelsey Rd**

**VISITING:** All areas of the Kelsey Arboretum are open dawn to dusk daily. Gates are unlocked, open and close upon entering and leaving. This is a Conservation Restriction thus, please pick up after your animals; if using the picnic area, take all trash with you; and remember, No open fires allowed.

We offer Arboretum specimen and horticulture tours to groups. Please contact us at [kelseyarboretumboxford@gmail.com](mailto:kelseyarboretumboxford@gmail.com) to schedule.





### **VOLUNTEER WORK & CLEAN-UP DAY**

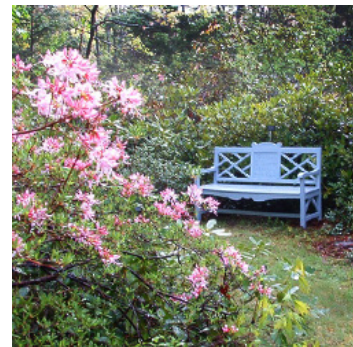
Our Annual Volunteer Spring Clean-up & Work Day is Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 9am – noon to spruce-up the arboretum for our visitors. We are fortunate to be working alongside professional arborists, who will guide us in identifying and pruning trees and shrubs and clearing walkways, as well as some raking and plant maintenance. Volunteering is a great way to enjoy the beauty of nature, meet new friends and contribute to the benefit of the Boxford community! Come with work gloves, hand pruners and rakes. No experience necessary. All ages welcome! Rain date is Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, same time.

### **INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT KELSEY ARBORETUM?**

We invite community members interested in volunteering at our 2025 Events, including Earth Day (May 1), Blossom Day (May 31), Apple Festival Plant, Trails & Sails Day (Sept). and various other Arboretum work, to contact us at [kelseyarboretumboxford@gmail.com](mailto:kelseyarboretumboxford@gmail.com) and let us know your interest.

#### ***Why volunteer:***

- ✓ *Enjoy the outdoors*
- ✓ *Make new friends*
- ✓ *Learn new things*
- ✓ *Have fun*
- ✓ *Support local conservation and preservation goals*



### **SYMPATHY EXTENDED TO THE FAMILY OF RICHARD KING**

The Horticulture Society of Boxford and the Kelsey Arboretum extend heartfelt sympathy to Evie King and Richard King's extended family and employees in the loss of Richard (of King's Tree farm) this year. For many, many years he was supportive of the Arboretum. His expert knowledge and advice were always a treasure in our maintenance of special trees, rhododendrons, azaleas and lilacs. We are fortunate to have known him. He will be greatly missed. Blessings to his memory and work.

*The Kelsey Arboretum is a Conservation Restriction deeded to the Horticultural Society of Boxford. HSB is a nonprofit (501 3 c). We receive no local, state or federal funding. **HSB relies solely on its donors. No gift is more important than yours! Donations of any amount can be made via check to HSB, PO Box 142, Boxford MA 01921. Individual and family memberships are also available.***

HSB, a non-profit organization, depends on memberships to sustain expenses incurred from preserving and maintaining Kelsey's Arboretum for the public to enjoy in so many ways: a quiet arboretum featuring HPK's signature "Hardy American Plants," interesting, imported and native trees set in the last parcel of the 500 acre Kelsey Highlands Nursery, set at the junction of the Bay Circuit Trail and the Boxford Rail Trail.

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please include this form with your tax-deductible membership to:

**The Horticultural Society of Boxford**

**P.O. Box 142 • Boxford, MA 01921**

**[www.kelseyarboretum.org](http://www.kelseyarboretum.org)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership categories:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual    \_\_\_\_\_ \$40 Family    \_\_\_\_\_ \$80 Contributor

\_\_\_\_\_ \$150 Sponsor    \_\_\_\_\_ \$500    \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be an active member and volunteer. Please contact me.