



Tree Houses Build

Lasting Memories at **Tyler Arboretum**

Laura McPhail

The warmth of sunrays peeking through a canopy of gently swaying leaves ... the faint smell of wood mingled with grass clippings ... the roughness of bark under curious fingertips ... the sight of a squirrel scurrying across limbs high above or an ant carrying an impossible payload below ... and the infinite possibilities of an active imagination.

For many of us, fond childhood memories include happy hours spent playing in tree houses or forts. Often, this rite of passage is passed on from parent to child in mutual enjoyment of the wonders of the natural world. Tyler Arboretum is continuing efforts to rekindle these special memories for visitors of all ages by adding two new tree houses to its permanent *Totally Terrific Treehouses* exhibit.

Tiptoe to the Tulip Tree House

Mid-June is the target date for the opening of the *Tulip Tree House*, designed by Parris Bradley, joining *Fort Tyler*, which opened Memorial Day, and designed by Linn Architects of Media, PA. Bradley, who previously participated in the *Nature's Enchantment* exhibit by creating the popular *Troll Bridge* and won first place for his *Nature's Wave* bench in last year's *Sit A Spell* exhibit, drew inspiration from the unique leaf shape of the iconic native tulip poplar tree. "I love tulip trees," Bradley said. "They have dead straight trunks and this great, thick variegated bark. When I found the grove, I thought, 'Oh, I have to do something here.' People will be able to walk

Build your tree house memories at Tyler Arboretum's newest additions—Fort Tyler, left, and the Tulip Tree House, as shown in an architectural drawing, above. Go see the finished structures!

Built in 2009, Backyard Memories was inspired by the typical backyard tree houses children build. Climb into the crow's nest and let your imagination take over! Below: Story Book Houses provide a whimsical place for children to connect with tales from nature.

The Birdhouse, one of the many other tree houses built for prior exhibits that are still open for exploring.

to the tree house over a bridge from the embankment instead of using a rope ladder or a ladder going up the trunk—this will be more accessible than the average tree house.”

The *Tulip Tree House* is not only more accessible, it’s also all-inclusive. “It will be for girls and boys as well as for adults and includes a wooden kitchen, a little dining room table and chairs,” said Bradley. In addition to donating his considerable design talents, Bradley also arranged for lumber donation from Beatty Lumber and Millwork Co.

Fort Tyler Tree Fort

Tyler’s second new tree house was created through a unique collaboration among three community members. When Rick Colbert, Tyler’s Executive Director, approached Bob Linn of Linn Architects about designing a tree house, Bob jumped at the chance. “We are all kids at heart,” said Linn. “Tree houses appeal to kids of all ages, from six to 60.”

Linn drew inspiration from the iconic childhood tree fort, capitalizing on the gentle hillside under a shady grove of trees on the Scenic Loop path. *Fort Tyler* features a 12 x 12-foot platform rising 13 feet high, acces-

sible by a level catwalk-like bridge extending from the top of the hill to the lookout.

Talented builders were not hard to find. Tyler contacted The Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades in Media. Williamson students have been enthusiastic donors of time and talent for many Tyler projects, involving students from the Paint, Carpentry, Machine Tool and Horticulture programs.

The third team member, Toll Brothers, provided lumber through their Toll Green program, which includes building homes (and now tree houses!) that reduce environmental impact and feature energy efficient design elements.

And More Tree Houses

These two new additions join a set of fun and whimsical existing tree houses for Tyler’s *Totally Terrific Treehouses* exhibit from 2008. The first set of tree houses included *Williamson Serves* built by The Williamson School, an ode to creativity and fancy called *Imagination Station*, a platform cantilevered to a towering white oak called *Outlook*, a musically interactive house called *Bell House*, a nod to local architecture in the *Cape May Bird House*, and *Thoreau’s Cabin*, a house that celebrates the tranquility of nature nestled in the trees near the pond.

These tree houses were so popular that three more were added the following year. *Tree Hugger* was built by students from Philadelphia University and is made of materials salvaged on-site from fallen trees and from reclaimed lumber. The horticulture department at Tyler created their own homage to the classic tree house design called *Backyard Memories*. Finally, *Strummin’ and Drummin’* repurposed the trunk and stump from a fallen tree by turning it into a giant guitar and bongo drum waiting in the woods for young musicians to come play.

It is easy to see that each tree house at Tyler is special and offers unique nature experiences for the young and young-at-heart to make new tree house memories guaranteed to last for years to come. ♦

Special Events

Brews and Bluegrass Chiller

Friday, June 21, 7 to 9 p.m.

Fairy and Wizard Festival

Sunday, June 30, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tree House Festival

Sunday, July 21, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Butterfly Festival

Saturday, August 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.