



**LIMELEDGE**  
BOTANICAL GARDEN AND ARBORETUM

Volume 2, Issue 1



**Newsletter of the Limeledge  
Botanical Garden and  
Arboretum**

**Editor's Note:** After a hiatus, *The Raccoon Den* returns! This newsletter is named after one of the many unique features of the property: A limestone outcrop containing many ridges and cavities serving as excellent habitat for a number of animal species... and many interesting plants as well. As Limeledge continues to establish itself, this newsletter is intended to be a semiannual publication distributed to local organizations, professionals, and benefactors.

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## Limeledge Awarded Grant For Community Environmental Education Center!

On December 17, 2025, Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) \$272,982 to begin the first stage of renovating the historic barns at the Brookside area at Limeledge and improve our trail system. This will allow Limeledge to establish the Brookside Community Environmental Education Center, providing indoor event space for K-12 programming, educational tours, and community lectures.

Construction is slated to begin on the foundation of the larger barn on May 1, 2026. Although the big barn work grabs the flashy headlines, site updates at Brookside began in July 2025 with a grant from the CNY Community Foundation. In addition to the ongoing and future work on the Limeledge grounds, we partnered with Go Native! Perennials, who immediately got to work establishing a production facility at Brookside.

In partnership with GNP, we were able to install a new well and run new electrical conduit to our barns, setting the stage for their restoration and future use. This exciting collaboration is detailed on the next page by the fantastic Janice Wiles!



Artistic rendering of the renovated barns at the Brookside CEEC at Limeledge.

# Limeledge And Go Native! Perennials Are Teaming Up

Guest Author: Janice Wiles

*Go Native! perennials is proud to announce a new partnership with Limeledge Botanical Garden and Arboretum to create a vibrant hub for Central New York's native flora.*



This collaboration offers a unique opportunity to steward wild plant populations for seed production while creating a living classroom where people can connect with the plants that define our region's natural heritage.

In May, we began planting the first of many demonstration gardens, starting with the relocation of over 5,000 native plants from our current site. These gardens will serve as seed sources, educational spaces, and living showcases of the region's biodiversity—helping all of us build familiarity with native vegetation and its essential role in rewilding and ecological restoration.

We're also developing educational programs that will be announced via Limeledge e-newsletter, *The Raccoon Den*, the Go Native! newsletter, and our social media channels. In response to climate projections for a wetter region, two early initiatives include native cattail and bullrush propagation and sedge identification and cultivation. We plan to form



working groups to re-search, grow, plant, and monitor these species—possibly right in your own yard. Please sign up



Together, we envision Limeledge as both a sanctuary for biodiversity and a hub for community learning. Visitors will experience thriving native ecosystems and discover how rewilding—restoring landscapes with native plants—supports climate resilience, biodiversity, and a more livable future.

We believe that restoring connections between people and place is essential—and this partnership makes that possible, rooted in science, community, and hope.



## A Native Plant Memory Garden Rises From the Ashes

When Limeledge first partnered with Go Native! Perennials, GNP owner Janice Wiles was eager to start planting. GNP relies on seed collections every year to replenish much of their herbaceous stock for the following year, and Limeledge was happy to oblige them with space for planting areas that could be used for seed collection and as demonstration gardens for potential clients. Since GNP specializes in restoration using native herbaceous species, and they wanted a spot at Brookside where their work could be front and center, they took on the challenge of restoring the area where the farmhouse had stood until a fire destroyed it in January, 2022.



The site presented numerous challenges in terms of planting and restoration, but the GNP crew did a fantastic job filling in the space, a process which continues. There is still some debris on one corner of the former homestead area, and it was heavily invaded by stag-horn sumac (*Rhus typhina*), pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*). Literally among the ashes and uneven surfaces from the settling burn debris, GNP installed a range of herbaceous species and a few strategic woody additions, such as Allegheny serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), common ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), and black aronia (*Aronia melanocarpa*).

With the living foundations for the garden in place, Vice President Alan Simmons worked with GNP to integrate a focal point that he assembled from some of the remaining bricks and stonework from the old farmhouse. This was especially meaningful to Alan, as the farmhouse was his childhood home and a place of deep connection. A 19th-century cistern was saved from the basement of the house before demolition was completed, and will likely be part of a water feature in the future.





Once the main plantings and a bit of hard-scape were established, some accents have been added to help tie this garden into the broader theme of Brookside: native North American plants that may be under the radar, but can ignite the interest of visitors. The only species not from North America in this garden is a rose-of-Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) seedling that survived the fire and is being retained as a Simmons Legacy plant to honor the history of Brookside. Several sweetshrubs (*Calycanthus*) have been added, as well as a red-osier dogwood cultivar with brilliantly variegated leaves (*C. sericea* 'Hedgerows Gold'), and the recently-described *Monarda austroappalachiana* (a beebalm that turns red in fall!). In a poetic nod to some west coast fire ecology, a red alder with lobed leaves (*Alnus rubra* 'Pinnatisecta') anchors part of the backdrop beneath the spruces. Almost never seen in cultivation, this species of alder has been successful in Syracuse. Near the cistern and possible future water feature, a variegated lizard's-tail plant discovered in the wild in North Carolina (*Saururus cernuus* 'Hertford Streaker') and can be semi-aquatic in nature, was added. Perhaps the most "Limeledge" inclusion of all: a mystery shrubby dogwood purportedly from North America but first spotted in, and described from, a French arboretum (*C. pumila*).



We are even leaning into the pokeweed intrusion by including a cultivar with golden foliage. Who says "weeds" can't be fancy, especially when they are an important native species?!

## Collections Updates and Volunteer Opportunities

Limeledge and its living collections are not intended to ever have a formal appearance like a golf course; this is a rugged, rural property with a long agricultural history; our objective is to lean into that while utilizing some of the available space for a curated, world-class plant collection. Our main planting areas will be mowed only twice a year at strategic times to promote winter habitat, herbaceous growth and benefits for wild pollinators, and to manage infiltration of woody plants. As we build capacity, these areas will have several walking trails that will be mowed and maintained more frequently, including an *Oak Trail* that will meander through the Cook Lot, linking many different species of oaks that are situated to align with changes in the soil that occur across that planting area.

Some more specific updates and volunteer opportunities:

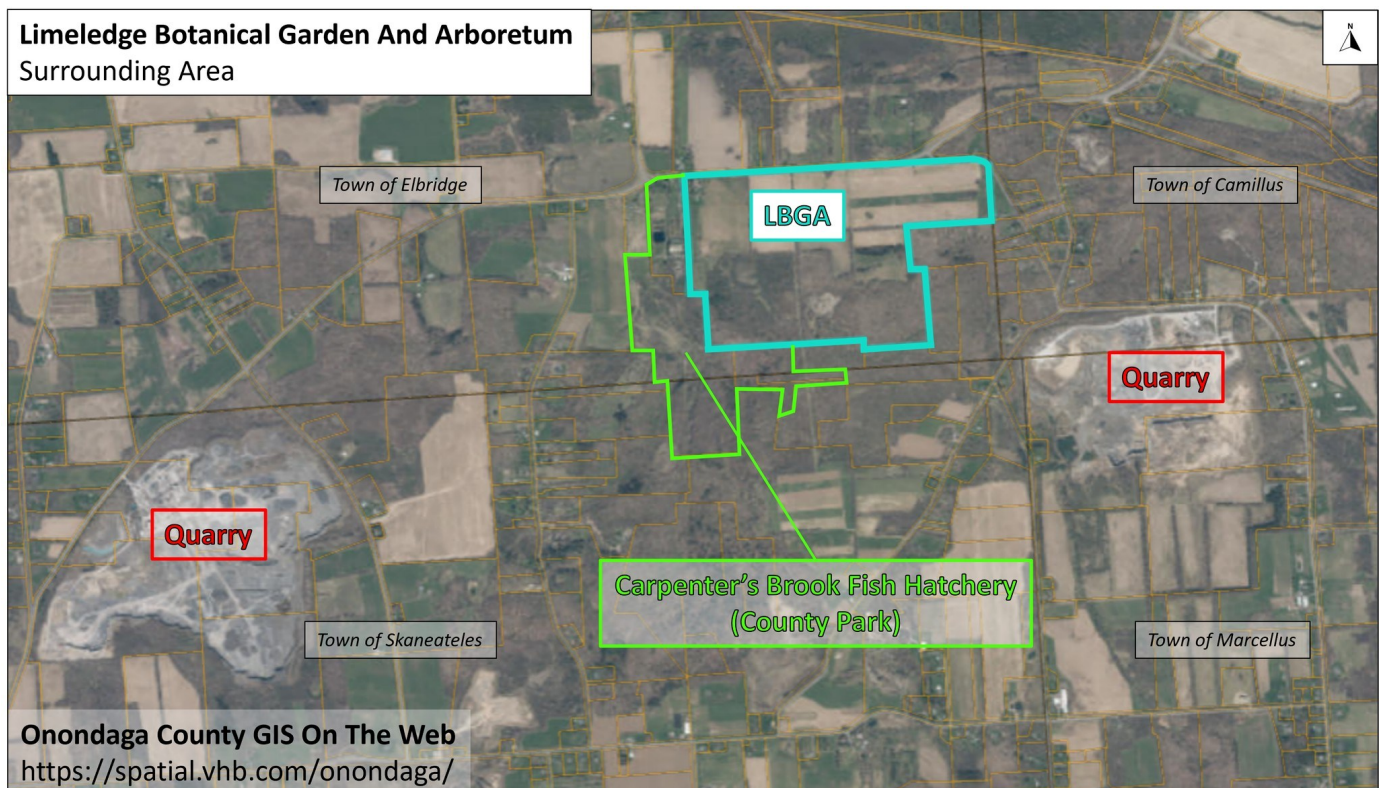
- An online, georeferenced collections spreadsheet and map is in the works that will allow visitors to easily look through the Limeledge plant holdings and see the location of each plant.
- The Brookside Area around the barns and GNP production facility will have more conventional gardening areas that volunteers can adopt and maintain.
- Construction on the barns is slated to begin on May 1, 2026; with a few exceptions, we're holding off on installing plantings and landscaping too close to the barns until then, but there will be many opportunities to help maintain collections around the barns in the future.



- The Cook Lot has over two hundred plants, some with tree guards, cages, and a need for some volunteers to help reduce herbaceous competition as plants get established.
- New planting spaces: an area focusing on hawthorn species (*Crataegus*) will complement the Cook Lot and provide some additional opportunities, while another area is being investigated for planting western and arid-climate conifers.
- The “Torreya Ten” initiative described in a previous edition of *The Raccoon Den* is indefinitely on hold. After consulting with forest pathologist Dr. Jason Smith as well as staff from Atlanta Botanical Garden, the leading institution on the recovery of this species, the risks of accidentally introducing a novel pathogen that could impact native species is too great. While we are open to establishing an ex situ population of *Torreya taxifolia* at Limeledge, which has ideal habitat for this species, this would need to be done using verified pathogen-free plants generated in sterile culture.

## Preserving Critical Habitat: Central New York’s Natural Heritage

In October 2025, Limeledge was approached yet again about selling the property for mining. We are committed not only to protecting this property and the critical habitat therein, but also to making it available to the public free of charge.



The wide range of soil types and habitats at Limeledge makes it a very important site for preservation. As the map above shows, Limeledge sits on top of a limestone formation that has been extensively exploited in this area. Despite this, there is still a broad swath of forest in the area bounded by Foster, NY-Route 321, Limeledge, Shepard, and Stump roads.

This forest belt that extends from the northwestern corner of the Town of Skaneateles into the adjacent corners of Elbridge, Marcellus, and Camillus boasts a wide range of soil types and habitats, and exceptionally diverse.



This area contains many rare and unusual species; among the woody components, a native stand of Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*; NY-endangered and declared possibly extinct in the wild in Onondaga County in 2019), rock elm (*Ulmus thomasii*; NY-threatened) and red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) are some of the highlights. Other species are noteworthy for their sheer abundance, such as black maple (*Acer saccharum* ssp. *nigrum*) in the drier, rockier woodlands; bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) in the woodland understory pretty much everywhere, and butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) which appears in unusual density in some areas and appears to be fighting off butternut canker more effectively than typical, likely due to ideal habitat conditions. The presence of American sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) in this forest belt highlights the variation in soil characteristics and the biodiversity resulting from so many different environmental conditions present in this relatively small area.



A team from SUNY ESF came to examine some of the plants, especially the ferns, at Limeledge in August. Pictured: Dr. Crim, Dr. Donald Leopold, Michael Hough, and Patrick Murphy. Photo Credit: Dr. Sam Quinn

## Supporting Conservation: Corporate Sponsorship Opportunities

Located less than 20 minutes from downtown Syracuse, Limeledge Botanical Garden and Arboretum is an emerging public destination dedicated to conservation, environmental education, and community engagement. Sponsorship helps bring nature-based learning, recreational opportunities, and ecological restoration to communities across Central New York.

### Baseline Benefits for Corporate Sponsors

- Logo placement on Limeledge homepage with link
- Logo placement in The Raccoon Den (biannual publication)
- Inclusion of logo in email newsletters
- Invitation to annual Sponsor Appreciation & Volunteer Recognition Event

### Sponsorship Tiers

- Seed Sponsor: \$500 annually  
-All baseline benefits
- Sapling Sponsor: \$1500 annually  
-All Seed benefits plus signage at trailhead  
-Inclusion in select press materials  
-Opportunity for corporate volunteer day



One of the unusual “shaggy” Kentucky coffeetrees, unlike anything else known in its native range. If our site had been developed, we would have lost this unusual population of NY-endangered coffeetrees without ever knowing they existed.



- Canopy Sponsor: \$3000 annually
  - All Sapling benefits plus recognition on event banners
  - Corporate feature in *The Raccoon Den*
  - Private guided tour with the Executive Director

### A La Carte Opportunities

Event sponsorships, garden and trail naming opportunities, and project-based partnerships (tools, signage, equipment, or restoration work). These opportunities are evaluated individually and may require a separate agreement.

### Duration of Sponsorship

All sponsorships are annual. Multi-year or naming agreements may be considered for strategic partnerships or major contributions.

### Recognition Guidelines

Recognition is tasteful, mission-consistent, and designed to preserve the natural aesthetic of Limeledge. Limeledge retains control over design and placement of sponsor materials across digital, print, and on-site formats.

### Sponsor Eligibility

Limeledge partners only with organizations whose values align with community well-being, education, environmental stewardship, and scientific integrity. Limeledge may decline sponsorships that conflict with its mission.

## Limeledge 2026 Wish List

As Limeledge Botanical Garden and Arboretum continues to take shape, community support—both large and small—plays a critical role in helping us care for the land, expand public access, and build long-term organizational capacity and sustainability.

### Small Gifts

Everyday tools make a meaningful difference. Donations of chainsaws, garden tools, safety gear, gloves, and general supplies directly support trail maintenance, habitat restoration, and volunteer workdays across the property.

### Naming- and Sponsorship-Level Gifts

Larger gifts help move Limeledge into its next phase of growth. Priority needs include a **mini tractor** for mowing and site maintenance and contributions to the **Director Endowment Fund**, which will ensure strong, consistent leadership for Limeledge well into the future.

Whether modest or transformative, each gift helps Limeledge grow as a place for conservation, education, and community. We are deeply grateful for your support.





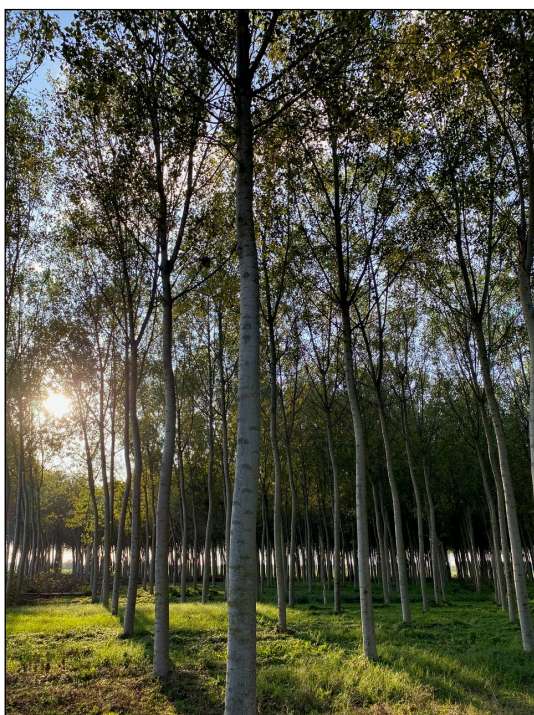
# The International Poplar Society — The Story Begins

Guest Author: Dr. Mateusz Korbik

Poplars, cottonwoods and aspens (genus *Populus*) are highly adaptable trees, capable of thriving in a wide range of site conditions, including challenging and degraded environments. They are also known for their rapid growth, which makes them some of the most economically significant trees in the temperate zone (Fig. 1). Poplars are trees of great ornamental and practical value, finding their place in numerous projects around the globe (Fig. 2). Years of selection and breeding have resulted in many valuable cultivars, giving these trees a remarkably wide range of uses. Today, poplars are known across nearly all continents—everywhere except Antarctica.



Like many other tree genera, poplars have attracted numerous enthusiasts and specialists around the world. Unfortunately, until recently, there was no dedicated space for knowledge exchange or open collaboration.



**Figures 1-2 (left-right). Left: Poplar plantation in Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, Italy. Right: *Populus alba* trees planted near The Bosco Verticale — the Latin name of the species is embedded in the pavement. Photos: M. Korbik**

While the International Poplar Commission (IPC) — likely the most recognized institution dedicated to poplars — its activities are mostly limited to official national representatives and not accessible to the wider public. There was a clear need for an international society that would welcome both experts and amateur enthusiasts alike — an organization that could cover all aspects of poplars, including not just those of economic interest, but also those related to many other fields. Therefore, The International Poplar Society (IPS) was created to connect researchers, authors, botanists, nurserymen, home gardeners, students, and poplar lovers from around the world.

I first came up with the idea in Autumn 2019, but the lack of a society like this had been noticeable well before then. Once I wrote down the name 'The International Poplar Society' on a sticky note, I immediately designed a logo — something that felt like sealing the beginning of the work ahead (see below). I was lucky to have a group of outstanding poplar experts and friends who reacted enthusiastically to the idea. Their support was truly invaluable and contributed greatly to shaping the foundation of the Society.

Among the first to support the idea were:

- Dawid Andrzejczak (Warsaw, Poland)
- Erik Carlson, PhD (Liverpool, NY, USA)
- Philip Crim, PhD (Troy, NY, USA)
- Anne de Jongii (Den Horn, the Netherlands)
- Małgorzata Godlewska (Łódź, Poland)
- Jason Smith, PhD (Alliance, OH, USA)
- Kristopher Stone (Burlington, KY, USA)



Over the following years, we worked on the legal documents required to register the association. The Society was officially registered as an association on January 29, 2025, in Warsaw, Poland. The founding board consisted of: Mateusz Korbik as President, Dawid Andrzejczak as Vice-President, and Małgorzata Godlewska as Board Member. While Polish law does not allow foreigners to formally register an association, the board decided to award the symbolic title of 'Founder Member' of the International Poplar Society to the individuals who played a key role in bringing the organization to life. As outlined in our statutes, the title of 'Founder Member' is purely honorary and symbolic.

The formal registration of the Society marked a major milestone, but the road ahead remains long — especially given the complex administrative and tax-related challenges in Poland. Since January, we've been working through a series of administrative hurdles to comply with all regulatory requirements. We hope to finalize all legal and tax-related matters by the end of 2025 and begin regular activities in 2026.

The International Poplar Society is formally dedicated to a broad scope of activities, including:

- Arranging scientific meetings
- Organizing dendrological walks and expeditions
- Organizing public readings and lectures
- Organizing national and international conventions and conferences
- Conducting training courses, including those leading to the awarding of certificates
- Cooperation with related domestic and foreign societies
- Publishing its own scientific and popular science journals, monographs, and ephemeral prints
- Announcing competitions, awarding quality certificates, distinctions, and prizes for dendrological research, and maintaining model collections
- Expressing opinions and intervening in cases of actions that are detrimental to trees and afforestation, undertaken within the country and abroad by state and local government bodies and individual
- Introduction of poplar/cottonwood/aspen species and varieties, their breeding, acclimatization, cultivation, and dissemination
- Conducting research on various aspects of biology, cultivation, and breeding of poplars/cottonwoods/aspens



- Reviewing documents regarding the protection of trees and afforestation
- Learning about, inventorying, and taking care of existing trees in Polish and foreign parks, gardens, cemeteries, orchards, avenues, housing estates, and streets, as well as natural communities
- Creation of dendrological collections and establishment of dendrological gardens of the "Populetum" type
- Supporting the operation of experimental stations, seed plantations, and forest crops
- Maintaining the Society's museum, library, and herbarium
- Awarding honorary membership or the honorary medal of the International Poplar Society to particularly deserving individuals
- Maintaining a list of poplar/cottonwood/aspen cultivars and registering new ones

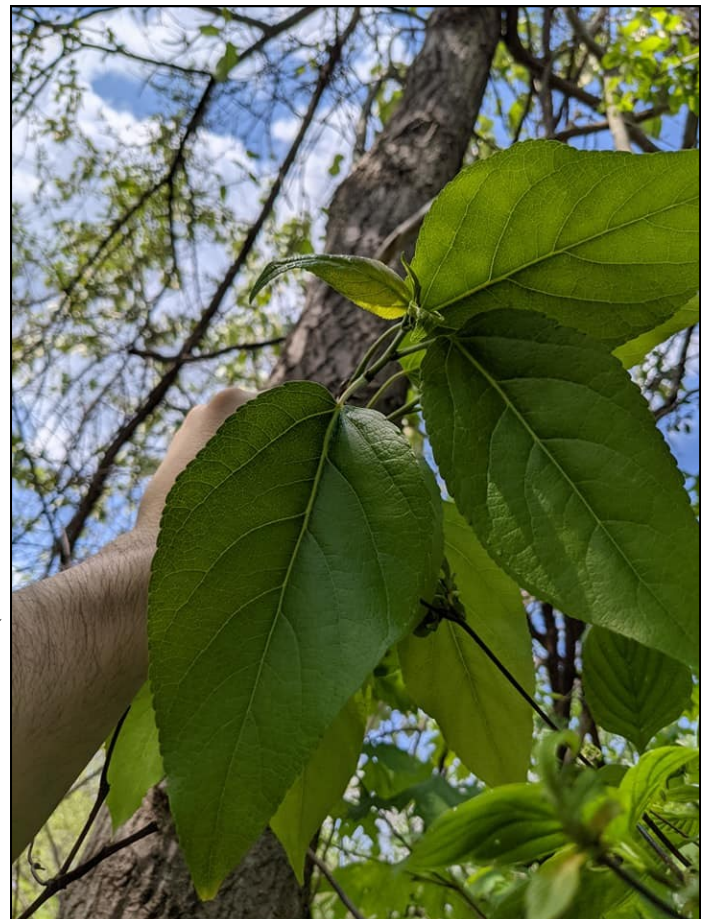
There is still much to be done, and we are excited for the future. We have already begun laying the ground-work for official poplar collections — one of them located at the Limeledge Botanical Garden and Arboretum. This is only the beginning, and we're looking forward to what comes next!

All those interested in poplars or becoming a member of the IPS are welcome to contact us — [contact@poplarsociety.org](mailto:contact@poplarsociety.org).

### **An addendum from Dr. Crim**

According to *Catalog of the Vascular Plants of New York State* (Werier 2017), there are eight species and several hybrids of of poplars/aspens/cottonwoods native or naturalized across New York State. Counting species in private collections and arboreta, this number would increase dramatically. All but one of the native species occur in Onondaga County, and all but one of those occur naturally at Limeledge. Indeed, our western border with Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery has several large and noteworthy specimens of wild *Populus deltoides* (Eastern cottonwood).

The two NY-native species that do not occur naturally at Limeledge are present in our living collections: Balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*) collected with permission from a Camillus, NY population and swamp poplar (*P. heterophylla*) from a cultivated source. The latter is listed as threatened in New York and can be found in the Hudson Valley region on both sides of the river south of the Kingston area. A mystery poplar occurs below the main overlook at Limeledge (Fig.4) and has so far resisted attempts at identification. It most strongly resembles *P. balsamifera*, which may have been present as a native species at Limeledge and occurs as a native species nearby. From a distance, it resembles *Catalpa*!



**Fig. 4. Mystery *Populus* entity below Limeledge overlook**

*For every plant a place.*

Special thanks to Ben Simmons for assisting  
with art!



*Dr. Philip Crim, Director and editor*

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## The Raccoon Den

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### Website

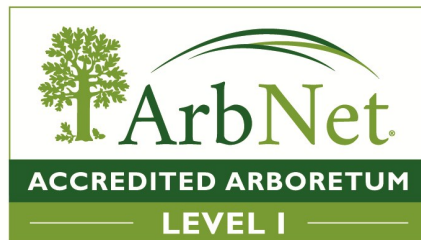
[www.limeledge.org](http://www.limeledge.org)

We are currently working on our event schedule for this year. Keep an eye on our website for all of our public events in 2026! These will be a mix of on-site tours, online lectures, and volunteer days.

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Limeledge is open to the public from May 1st to October 31st

Dawn to dusk. We cherish the members of our community and the opportunity to share this unique site with everyone; site admission will always be free!



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