

Mr. Phil Normandy: Retirement After 42 Years

By William C. Miller III—Bethesda, Maryland

It's the end of an era. Phil Normandy has retired from Brookside Gardens after a career of more than 42 years.

A native of North Carolina and a lover of trees since childhood, Phil received his Bachelor of Science degree in Ornamental Horticulture in 1974 from NC State. In the subsequent three years, he was a horticulturist for the 100-acre arboretum of the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories in Charlotte, North Carolina. From 1977-1979, he continued his formal education as a Fellow in the Longwood Program, which is sponsored jointly by Longwood Gardens and the University of Delaware.

In July 1979, he joined the staff of Brookside Gardens, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's famous demonstration garden located in Wheaton, Maryland. As collections manager at Brookside Gardens, he was responsible for the acquisition and placement of the permanent plant collections as well as the supervision of garden maintenance. In 1986, grounds supervisor for McCrillis Gardens in Bethesda, Maryland, was added to his responsibilities. Fondly, known as the "Tree Whisperer," no one has had a greater impact on the development of Brookside Gardens. He knows the many interesting stories behind the trees, shrubs, and bulbs that the public has come to enjoy year round. During

Phil Normandy had a fondness for trees from an early age. This 1990 image of Phil Normandy standing in the Brookside Gardens rose garden, hugging a tree (with the conservatory in the background), was a large poster that was presented to him by a student on the last day of class of a George Washington University Landscape program. Photo Credit: unknown.



Phil Normandy's last day was June 30, 2021, and they treated him to a retirement party worthy of 42 years of service on July 1. Friends, co-workers, and associates gathered in the Brookside Gardens main auditorium to celebrate his career and to wish him well. Photo Credit: Montgomery Parks, MNCPPC.

his career, he helped Brookside Gardens weather three Brood X cicada invasions.

With all that, he still had time to reach out to and interface with the public. He was a generous supporter of the Friends of the Brookside Gardens, Inc. and helped with all of the activities, especially the plant sales. He has been an instructor in woody plants in the Landscape Design Program of the George Washington University, he led numerous classes in the educational program at Brookside Gardens, and he was a member of the Gold Medal Plant Award Committee of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. He also was a good friend of the ASA. He addressed meetings of the three local Washington-area ASA chapters, he was major speaker at the 1995 ASA National Meeting, and he frequently served as a flower show judge for the Brookside Gardens chapter's annual azalea flower show.

I have no doubt that he will not fade away. I certainly don't see a rocking chair in his future. The banner that they presented to him at his retirement party said: "Retired—Not Expired."