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Maud Gordon Holmes Arboretum Collection: The White Fir

Posted: **March 4, 2014**

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The Campus Beautification Advisory Committee (CBAC) is a group of faculty, staff, and student advocates dedicated to facilitating projects and business that enhance the aesthetic beauty, comfort, and appearance of college facilities; support recruitment and retention; and inspire pride in the institution and a positive sense of community for all constituents.

One function of the committee is to publicize outstanding campus features. To that end, the committee is promoting the Maud Gordon Holmes Arboretum by sharing information about the trees in this collection.

Tree name: White Fir (*Abies Concolor*)
Location: Southeast corner of Bacon Hall

Listed as number 1 on the map of the Maud Gordon Holmes Arboretum, the White Fir's lowest branches form a convenient and welcoming canopy over the entrance of Bacon Hall. The tree protects visitors from precipitation throughout the year, provides shade during the summer months, and appears at its most spectacular during the snowy winter months.

The White Fir is native to the United States. It was first identified in 1852 by the Cornish plant collector, William Lobb. It is found at elevations from 4,000 to 10,000 ft. from Oregon to California to Utah. It thrives in moderately humid regions with more than 40 inches of annual precipitation, but is adaptable to other areas. In its native habitat, this species can achieve 200 feet in height and can live for more than 300 years. At more than 60 feet, Buffalo State's White Fir peers over the roof of Bacon Hall.

Young White Fir trees have white bark that grays with age, hence the popular name. Its flat, silvery blue-green needles extend at right angles from all sides of the twigs. *Concolor* refers to the fact that the needles are the same color both top and bottom.

The White Fir is monoecious, meaning that both male and female cones grow on the same tree. The male cones appear reddish-brown, growing in dense clusters on young twigs. The barrel-shaped, woody female cones grow upright from 3 to 5 inches and change color—from green to purplish-brown—in late summer.

Historically, Native Americans used the bark, needles and resin of the white fir for medicinal, household, and decorative purposes. Today the pyramid-like symmetry of the White Fir makes it popular as a Christmas tree and for landscape purposes. In recent years, it has also gained favor in the building industry for its timber.

Article submitted by Laura Klenk, assistant professor, Elementary Education and Reading Department

Photo by Michael Gallo, instructional support assistant, Campus Services

Tagged as: Campus Beautification Advisory Committee, Community

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