

## NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Jodie Littleton  
Communications Consultant  
Adkins Arboretum  
410.490.6930  
jlittleton@adkinsarboretum.org



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### ***Tree Tricks*, site-specific sculpture by Howard and Mary McCoy, on view at Adkins Arboretum**

Walk a few yards into the cool, leafy shade of Adkins Arboretum's forest and you'll see something odd. Vines climb high into the trees in a tangle of green, but in one area along the path they're chopped off right at eye level. The 32 tall pines and young saplings rescued from being choked by vines form a site-specific sculpture called "Cropped."

Centreville artists Howard and Mary McCoy have created nine sculptures for *Tree Tricks*, their eighth outdoor sculpture show at the Arboretum. Each is site-specific, inspired by a certain place in the forest. The artists will lead a sculpture walk during the show's reception on Sat., June 22 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Because the McCoy's have been creating outdoor art at Adkins Arboretum every other year since 1999, they've come to know the forest well.

"Some of these trees are old friends," said Mary. "We've watched them grow and change over the years. Some have fallen in storms. The forest never stays the same, so it's always giving us new ideas for sculptures."

The two artists get not only their ideas from the woods but their materials, as well. Fallen branches, dead trees, vines and seedpods all become elements in their sculpture.



*Mary McCoy works on "Bristling," one of the site-specific sculptures created with her husband, Howard, at Adkins Arboretum.*



*"Gum Wrapper," made with gumballs on dead sweet gum tree, is one of Howard and Mary McCoy's site-specific sculptures at Adkins Arboretum.*

For “Bristling,” the McCoys gathered hundreds of small branches and inserted them along the length of a fallen tree so that they look like wildly animated plants sprouting from the decaying wood. Beside another path, a small dead sweet gum tree became a sculpture when they blanketed a section of it with dozens of sweet gum seedpods and titled it “Gum Wrapper.”

“Some of the pieces do have a humorous aspect,” said Howard. “We decided to call the show *Tree Tricks* because we had a lot of fun with it. We’ve become more and more interested in how our pieces blend with the nature around them and how you have to do a kind of double take sometimes to see—is it natural or is it one of the McCoys’ pieces?”

Change is an important theme for these artists. Whether they’re interrupting the growth cycle by cutting vines away or giving a dead tree “new life” by adding branches to it, the changing seasons and the cycles of birth, growth, death, decay and rebirth are recurring subjects in their work. They’re also interested in the sudden changes brought by unexpected events such as storms.

When a storm uprooted a towering tree last summer and wedged it against a slope with its trunk ten feet above one of the Arboretum’s paths, it formed a kind of gateway into the deep forest. For the McCoys, it was an invitation to make sculpture. Since the tree was a sweet gum, they fastened a long line of gumballs in a fringe along its underside and called it “Gumball Crossing.”

“Sometimes nature presents something to us in such an obvious manner that we just have to work with it,” Howard explained. “It’s declared by nature, it’s like ‘Hey, this is for you.’”

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through September 15 at the Arboretum, located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org) for hours.

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*Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. Through its [Campaign to Build a Green Legacy](#), it will build the [W. Flaccus and Ruth B. Stifel Center at Adkins Arboretum](#) and a “green” entranceway to broaden educational offerings and research initiatives promoting best practices in conservation and land stewardship. For additional information about Arboretum programs, visit [www.adkinsarboretum.org](http://www.adkinsarboretum.org) or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.*

**Adkins Arboretum   12610 Eveland Road   P.O. Box 100   Ridgely, MD 21620**  
**410.634.2847   [www.adkinsarboretum.org](http://www.adkinsarboretum.org)   [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org)**