

## **ARBOR DAY IN GLEN RIDGE, 2015**

This year the Glen Ridge Shade Tree Commission is making an Arbor Day statement in cherry trees. Over 30 cherry trees, of several varieties, have been planted along Bloomfield Avenue between the Montclair border and Ridgewood Avenue. It is hoped that they will add a new splash of color and shade to an area previously quite bereft of trees, in turn drawing greater attention to the intended planting of 1,000 trees in the borough in five years' time.

Over the past several decades, the borough has been losing its street trees at the rate of some 60 per year. The exorbitant cost of these take-downs has left almost no money for replanting, with the result that huge swatches of the town have substantial gaps in their tree canopies. In 1937, for example, Glen Ridge had 4,864 street trees. By 2013, after Sandy, that number had plunged to 2,963. In response, Mayor Peter Hughes urged the council to approve a 5-year capital investment outlay to reforest the entire town.

Yet, even with such a financial commitment by the mayor and council, the success of this massive replanting will ultimately rest with the public. While the new trees will belong to all the residents, it will be up to the homeowners in front of whose houses these trees are planted to make sure that they are properly watered, mulched and protected from rock salt, power mowers and weed whackers. After all, the average street tree in New Jersey lives only 8 years. But given that each sapling represents an investment of some \$300, the town is replanting with the expectation that the trees can be made to survive to maturity with the help of the community.

Allegedly, the fragility of cherry blossoms symbolizes the preciousness and precariousness of life. By extension, it is hoped that the Arbor Day cherry trees, newly planted along Bloomfield Avenue, will remind residents not only of the preciousness and precariousness of the borough's historically tree-lined streets, but also of their anticipated role in the restoration and preservation of this invaluable asset.