

# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***Suggestions* by Centreville Artists Howard and Mary McCoy on view at Adkins Arboretum**

With vines exuberantly spiraling and twisting together and short poems hanging on low tree branches, *Suggestions*, a new show of site-specific sculptures and poetry by Centreville artists Howard and Mary McCoy, invites you to walk in the forest at Adkins Arboretum. On view now through September 30, this is their 13<sup>th</sup> outdoor exhibition at the Arboretum. There will be a reception Saturday, June 8, from 2 to 4 p.m., featuring a guided sculpture and poetry walk with the artists.



***“Sassafras Swirl” is among the works on view at Adkins Arboretum by Howard & Mary McCoy. The show is up through Sept. 30.***

Every other year since 1999, the couple has been creating sculpture in response to what they find in the Arboretum’s forest. In much of their work, they focus on making sculptures from the vines they remove from trees. This saves the trees from the weight of the vines and the dense shade of the vines’ leaves that blocks sunlight from the trees’ own leaves.

“We help the trees, and we get all those natural art supplies out of the deal,” Howard said.

The animated, swirling shapes and quirky angles of the vines they gather suggest sculptural forms that the artists take as inspiration. Twirling and tangling vines came together to create “Snarl” a huge, playful sculpture that easily calls to mind a strange, undulating creature, while “Hunched” began with a natural pile of branches left by a fallen tree. The artists added more branches in the rhythmic patterns so that it, too, suggests a fantastical beast or perhaps some kind of primitive shelter.

“We’ve always thought of our outdoor sculptures as collaborations with nature,” Mary said. “The vines inevitably follow the curves they grew in, so there are only certain ways we can bend them and wire them together. That means the final sculpture is always a surprise. We follow nature’s guidance and just see what happens.”

A map showing the locations of the sculptures and poems is available in the Visitor’s Center. Each sculpture is marked with a bright blue sign on the ground and groups of poems can be found dangling from trees.

“My poems were all suggested by what I was experiencing in the forest while I was walking alone or just sitting on a bench watching and listening to everything around me,” Mary explained. “As I wrote, their relationship with other things in the forest or even in my personal life began to become more clear. There’s something about the simple act of writing that yields such intriguing insights.”

Both “Sassafras Swirl” and “Snarl” grew from an idea Howard had been wanting to explore. Seeing multiple vines growing up into the trees, he was interested in preserving their relationships to one another.

“The lines created by the movement of those vines is wonderful in itself,” he said. “We didn’t need to alter that, so I wanted to work with the vines in situ, wiring them together in place, just as they were growing, then cutting them loose.”

The two artists then moved the swirling clumps of vines to new settings where their shapes found fresh relationships with the trees around them.

“We experiment till we find the position where a sculpture sits comfortably into its surroundings, both physically and visually,” Mary said. “Both the connections between the vines themselves and with the surrounding trees make them strong and stable. The more connected they are, the stronger the web, and that’s so interesting because it’s something we’re missing in our understanding of the world today.”

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on through Sept. 30 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 100 or [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org) for gallery hours.

*A 400-acre native garden and preserve, Adkins Arboretum provides exceptional experiences in nature to promote environmental stewardship.*

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