

FOREGROUND / **NOW**
**LEFT**

The Whiting Forest's apple orchard will feature 75 varieties of apples.

APPLE'S EDEN

**A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
DESIGNS A SHOWCASE
FOR APPLE BIODIVERSITY.**

BY ZACH MORTICE

If you go to a grocery store, you've got seven apples you can choose from," says Chuck Martin, the grounds manager and senior horticulturist at the Whiting Forest of Dow Gardens. "One hundred years ago, there were hundreds." Martin has the orchard to prove it, along with a slate of elaborately named apples (Shiawassee Beauty, Bramley's Seedling, Black Gilliflower) to taste.

Carved out from the Dow Chemical family's estate in Midland, Michigan, the new section of Dow Gardens will feature a two-acre apple orchard containing 75 varieties, including contemporary cultivars and their ancient predecessors. The purpose, Martin says, is to preserve and showcase a biodiversity that largely has been shunted aside as commercial agriculture has consolidated.

Whiting Forest, designed by Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects and Metcalfe Architecture & Design, also includes 54 acres of recreational

"Mother" tree, which is original to Herbert Dow's first orchard. Mowed and paved paths and spacing between trees create a series of outdoor rooms, and each section is inspired by the types of apples it holds. The first section is filled with crabapples and *Malus sieversii*, the earliest extant predecessor to the contemporary apple, which originated in Kazakhstan. It is designed more as a shaggy and wild forest than a strict and rational orchard, allowing the apple trees to gradually "nestle into their surroundings," says Grace Herman, a landscape architect at Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

These specimens are being propagated with the help of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service facility in Geneva, New York, which maintains what is said to be the largest collection of *Malus sieversii* outside Central Asia. These plants still grow wild in Kazakhstan and in other regions of Central Asia to the east of

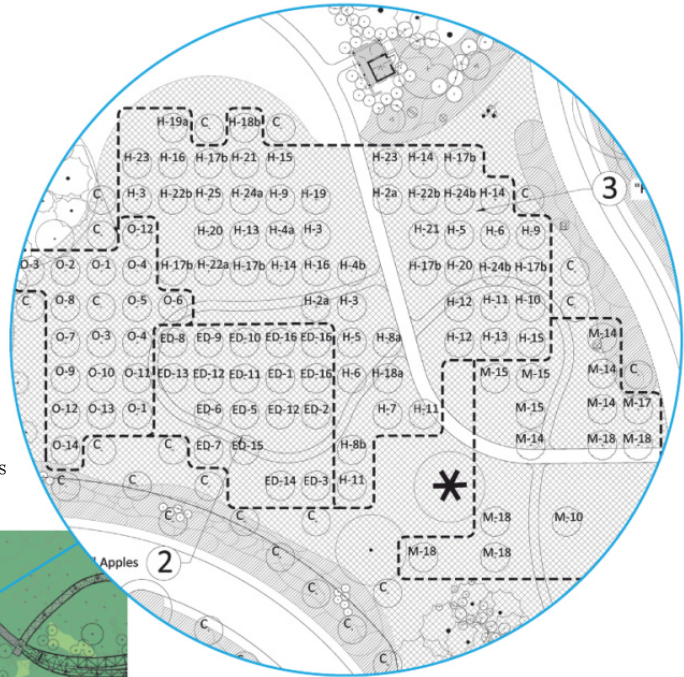
ponds, forests, playgrounds, and trails, and a 1,400-foot, elevated canopy walk. The preserve opened last year, and half of its planned 209 trees have been planted. Its first apples are expected in two years.

The orchard is divided into four sections that pinwheel around the

COURTESY JONATHAN ALDERSON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, INC.

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the Black Sea, says Chad Gluch, an orchard specialist at Dow Gardens. “The apples we have today started there,” he says. (The name of Kazakhstan’s former capital, Almaty, is sometimes translated as “father of apples.”)



The Whiting Forest Orchard Diagram

Orchard Zones

- 1 First Apples Ever
- 2 Early Domestic Apples
- 3 Homestead Apples
- 4 Modern Apples & Other Fruits

Legend

- Vehicular Circulation
- Paved Pedestrian Path
- Mowed Lawn Pedestrian Path
- No Mow Fescue

TOP RIGHT

The orchard is organized around four different types of apples. A tree original to Herbert Dow’s first orchard is denoted by an asterisk.

BOTTOM

Mowed paths create outdoor rooms in the orchard.

The second section contains heirloom apple varieties, and the third section highlights Dow’s favorite selections, including the enigmatically named Hubbardston Nonesuch, Ashmead’s Kernel, and Pitmaston Pineapple. Many apple varieties were specialist strains, bred to be canned, made into sweet cider, hard cider, apple sauce, pies, and more. The orchard’s final section contains contemporary apple varieties, more often bred into dwarfism and carefully affixed to espalier frames, such as the 84-foot Belgian fence at the orchard’s southern section.

As the four sections progress, plantings tighten into an ordered grid, reflective of how apple production advanced from wild trees to factory-scaled expressions of industrial efficiency. Herman hopes that this narrative landscape offers many different layers of experiences for visitors. “I think this is a place that people can go to repeatedly and still have takeaways every time,” she says. ●

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