Our lifelong devotion has been the development of a world-famous plant collection that we founded in 1976. The 48 acres of land on which Starhill Forest Arboretum is located has been farmed and grazed since the mid-19th century, when Abraham Lincoln traveled on the same road during his New Salem days. It is a classic forest arboretum with many naturalized plantings.

We had a rewarding 2009. It was the first full year for Starhill Forest as Illinois College’s official arboretum. For our collaboration with the College, we received the Illinois College Alumni Association’s Friends of the College Award, as well as the highest People and the Prairie Award (The Frank Bellrose Award) from Springfield’s The State Journal-Register. As a full member of the North American Plant Collections Consortium, Starhill Forest was accepted as one of the 16 designated National Reference Collections in North America for the genus Quercus (oaks) by the American Public Gardens Association.

Where do we go from here?

Much as we would like to sit back and catch our breath, there is much to be done, and soon. Having already hosted 15 Illinois College student interns during the past few years, we are preparing for our 2010 summer internship program. We are collaborating with the College to build and furnish a field laboratory for IC students, doubling as a small manager’s office and visitor assembly hall. This facility will allow us to host increasing numbers of Illinois College students, faculty and alumni for visits to study and simply enjoy our outdoor laboratory of trees and nature.

We also invite you – Illinois College’s alumni, parents and friends – to join us at Starhill Forest. It is also important to note, Illinois College is a partner in our Friends of Starhill Forest organization which honors the countless volunteers and donors who make it all happen. We need help to host large tour groups, as well as transplant and maintain trees, propagate seeds, groom trails and mow grass.

We greatly appreciate our relationship with Illinois College and are excited that the College will conserve and use our lifetime of work in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations. We speak on behalf of Illinois College asking that you consider joining us in person at Starhill Forest, Illinois College’s arboretum, and most importantly, as a donor and volunteer. We have a pair of work gloves waiting for you, just your size.