Nature’s Sanctuary at West Laurel Hill
This photo taken in 2013, prior to kickoff, depicts the condition of the site prior to design. The original green burial area had been taken over by invasive plant species.
Goats were employed for the initial invasive remediation of the site. Also a huge hit with the public, the goats are brought back annually to clear invasive plant material, and participate in the annual Sustainability Fair.
The “Assisted Ecological Succession” concept. The first installation is a native meadow. The meadow will evolve first into the shrub and sapling stage, then the pole stage, and eventually climax forest with the assistance of maintenance personnel.
Construction began during the summer of 2014, soil was removed to a 4’ depth and re-mediated on-site. Great care was taken not to disturb any of the remains that had been previously interred.
Soil replaced, pathways and memorial wall in progress.
September 2016, families of the interred joined the project team in a planting event to connect with the departed.
This photo taken in 2015, shows Nature’s Sanctuary during its first growing season, primarily a colony of Rudbeckia, the image helps to show how the site has rapidly changed since construction.
July 2017, the second growing season, additional species begin to thrive.
The apiary directly west of Nature’s Sanctuary, has been instrumental in the success of the plants in the garden. The landscape architecture team was also contracted to design educational signs for the site.
Constructed in late 2018, the raingarden is the newest addition to Nature’s Sanctuary, serving runoff from both the garden and nearby cemetery drive.
In June of 2018, the site was Dedicated as SITES Gold-Level Certified. It was the 9th Gold-Level landscape and the first cemetery in the world to achieve this certification.
Nancy Goldenberg, President and CEO of both West Laurel Hill and Laurel Hill Cemetery speaks at the dedication ceremony. Her leadership and commitment to the project has been instrumental in the success of the project.
Thank you for volunteering to evaluate the hard work of the Pennsylvania - Delaware Chapter of ASLA.