

# Southeastern PA Cold War Historical Society

Celebrating  
our 16th  
year



*Preserving History Through the Memories  
of Those Who Created It*

# The Greater Philadelphia Region has a rich aerospace heritage!

To celebrate **America250**, we'll be sharing some of the region's aerospace heritage throughout 2026!  
Look for our monthly posts and Happy Birthday America!



**250 AMERICA PA**  
NONPROFIT AFFILIATE



**250 AMERICA PA**  
BUCKS COUNTY

# Did you know?



We have **Moon Trees (and their descendants)**  
in the Greater Philadelphia Region!  
*Moon Trees are special because they are the only trees  
grown from seeds that orbited the Moon in 1971*



Astronaut Stu Roosa, Command Module Pilot on Apollo 14, had served as a U.S. Forest Service smoke jumper (fire fighter who jumped out of planes to combat wildland forest fires) in the 1950s before becoming an aviator and astronaut. He was contacted by Ed Cliff, then Head of the U.S. Forest Service, and was asked to fly tree seeds into space.

Roosa agreed and packed 500 seeds from redwood, loblolly pine, sycamore, Douglas fir and sweet gum trees into his personal travel kit.

A joint effort between NASA and the U.S. Forest Service, the seeds were flown as an experiment to determine the effects of deep space on seeds and also to help raise awareness about the Forest Service and smokejumpers.

The seedlings, dubbed “Moon Trees”, were planted across the United States and throughout the world following Apollo 14’s return to earth.

Unfortunately, after their return to Earth, the seed bags burst open during decontamination procedures, and they were scattered about the decontamination chamber and exposed to vacuum, and it was thought they might not be viable. Nonetheless, the seeds were retained and an attempt at germinating some of the seeds was made in Houston.

Somewhat surprisingly, it proved successful and the seeds started growing, but they did not survive long because the facilities there were inadequate. A year later, the remaining seeds were sent to Forest Service offices in Gulfport, MS (sycamore, loblolly pine, and sweetgum) and Placerville, CA (redwood and Douglas fir) to see if any could be germinated and grown into saplings. Some 450 saplings were grown.

Moon Tree saplings were gifted to schools, universities, parks, and government offices, many as part of the U.S. bicentennial celebrations in 1976. Locations were chosen, in part, to ensure proper climate conditions for the respective tree species which originated from southern and western regions of the U.S.

A Loblolly Pine was planted at the White House. Trees were also planted in Brazil, Switzerland, and Japan.

There was no clear difference in the growth of Moon trees and Earth trees despite their extraterrestrial journey!

Today, many of the original Moon Trees remain. Trees grown from Moon Tree seeds— called “Half-Moon Trees” have also been planted.



# Moon Tree

## Core Creek Park, Middletown Township, PA



Sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*)  
planted April 30, 1976 near the boat house



Source: [https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/moon\\_tree.html](https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/moon_tree.html)

# Moon Tree

## Lockheed Martin Campus, King of Prussia, PA



The Moon Tree in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania is planted at the Lockheed Martin Space Systems facility on Mall Boulevard (formerly named Goddard Boulevard). Located by the cafeteria, the sycamore was planted on June 30, 1976, as part of the Bicentennial celebration at what was then the Valley Forge Space Technology Center of the General Electric Space Division. The plaque has the date "July 30, 1976", but the original information about the planting was that it was on June 30. The plaque was added much later, so the date is not definitively known.



# Moon Tree- original and its descendant

## Washington Square Park, Philadelphia, PA

The original sycamore moon tree — the first of the Moon Trees ever planted on May 6, 1975— died in 2008. It was replaced by a clone of the original tree grown in a joint project of the National Park Service and Philadelphia's Morris Arboretum. It stands inside the park entrance at 6th and Walnut streets, just a block south of Independence Hall.



# Moon Tree- another descendant of the original Philadelphia sycamore tree

## Montgomery County Courthouse, Norristown, PA



Another cutting from the original Philadelphia sycamore Moon Tree which was cared for by the The Morris Arboretum was gifted to Montgomery County, PA in 2011. Once it had matured, it was planted in April 2015 outside the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, PA. It replaced a dying oak tree that was removed in 2009. Photographed here are Montgomery County commissioners with ceremonial shovels helping to plant the Moon Tree descendant.



# MOON TREE FOUNDATION



Rosemary Roosa is the daughter of Col. Stuart “Stu” Roosa, the Command Module Pilot of Apollo 14. Rosemary is the President of the Moon Tree Foundation, an educational non-profit organization founded to honor her father’s legacy of tree seeds taken aboard the Apollo 14 mission in 1971.

The organization arranges Moon Tree Ceremonies where Rosemary presents second-generation Moon Tree (aka Half-Moon Tree grown from seeds of original Moon Trees) along with a spoken presentation, a 15-minute video explaining the history of her father and the space traveling seeds, a memento to commemorate the event, and an option book signing event of *To the Moon: An Autobiography of an Apollo Astronaut’s Daughter* by Rosemary Roosa.

# The Legacy of the Apollo 14 Moon Trees

NASA *Artemis II* astronauts Victor Glover (left), Reid Wiseman (middle left), Christina Koch (middle right), and Canadian Space Agency (CSA) astronaut Jeremy Hansen (right), pose for a photo after a Moon Tree dedication ceremony, June 4, 2024, at the United States Capitol in Washington, DC.

The American Sweetgum tree pictured was grown from a seed that was flown around the Moon during the *Artemis I* mission.

In a nod to the legacy of Apollo 14, a “new generation” of Moon Tree seeds traveled into lunar orbit during *Artemis I*. The seeds travelled thousands of miles beyond the Moon, spending about 4 weeks in space before returning to Earth. Organizations from across the U.S. were to receive the seedlings and plant them in their communities.

The five tree species that flew on *Artemis I* were similar to those flown during Apollo 14: loblolly pine, sycamore, sweetgum, Douglas fir and Giant sequoia.



Moon Tree Dedication with Artemis II Crew - NASA