As a fledgling landscaper in the 1970s, Robert Kourik became curious about how tree roots actually grow. The then-common belief was that a plant’s roots extended underground only as far and wide as its foliage—illustrations of trees usually showed the roots as an upside-down mirror of the tree’s canopy. As Mr. Kourik thought about this, it just didn’t seem right, so in the 1980s he embarked on a quest, searching through agricultural libraries in hopes of finding photos and drawings of actual root systems. What he discovered radically changed how he had looked at roots. He learned, for example, that the area occupied underground by tree roots can be up to five times larger than the foliage above ground, and that frequently one-half or more of a plant’s mass is located below the surface of the soil. More than twenty year’s of root research and practical experience culminated in Mr. Kourik’s latest book, the soon to be published *Roots Demystified*.

Information in Mr. Kourik’s book is the basis for his symposium presentation. He will tell us the facts (and dispel the myths) about roots and their hidden and marvelous activities. He’ll discuss what plant roots do and how they grow, and how that knowledge can (and should!) change our gardening behavior. He’ll give us practical tips for protecting roots, nurturing the soil, and using water and mulch wisely.