

George Landis Arboretum NEWSLETTER

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Fall 1992

Trustee Donates Collection of Dwarf and Unusual Plants

Trustee Dick Southwick, retired Plant Science Professor at SUNY Cobleskill, has given the Arboretum a collection of several hundred (not yet completely inventoried) dwarf, rare and unusual plants. The collection is primarily conifers (*Abies*, *Picea*, *Pinus*, *Thuja*, *Chamaecyparis*, *Juniperus*) but also includes many rhododendron and other flowering plants.

Arboretum Director Pamela Rowling hopes to use this tremendous group of plants as the basis of a new garden to be located behind the library/greenhouse. An answer to the promise of the existing small planting of dwarf conifers on the east side of the library, the proposed garden of dwarf and unusual plants could fill the whole field, with space for future growth down along the rock ledge to the east or up the hill towards the Meeting House.

Preliminary discussion of the design for the garden shows the huge scope of this project and suggests much work that must be done before the actual planting can begin. For instance, one decision that needs to be reached early on is the style of planting—should the conifers be grouped synoptically (by like kinds) for teaching purposes? Mixed groupings for an artistic vision? By color—a blue garden, a golden garden—or by form, say, a group of weeping shapes? Another design decision involves the choice of what other plants to incorporate with the conifers. Some of Dick's suggestions

were creeping euonymous, ground covers in general, heaths and heathers, cotoneaster, and daylilies.

No matter which style becomes the chosen goal, a professional design will be needed. Transforming the flat field into an appealing garden will require a magic touch! Needless to say, the creation of the garden will require substantial funding for the design, soil amendments, earth moving equipment, etc. The Arboretum's volunteer crew will undoubtedly play an important role in the actual building of the new garden, providing an excellent opportunity for volunteers to participate in and learn through the entire process from design decisions to plant identification to proper planting procedures.

Dick Southwick, a Vermont native, came to Cobleskill in 1967. He served as Botanist here at the Arboretum from 1969-82 and as Associate Director from 1982-84. A Trustee from 1972-84, he is again serving as a Trustee currently. Affiliated so many years with the development of the Landis Arboretum, it seems especially appropriate that so much of his life's work will be on display here for future visitors. All of the donated plants were propagated by Dick at his home in Cobleskill.

When this writer asked Dick "What makes a plant dwarf?" he had a very simple answer—"It just doesn't grow." He went on to explain that the reasons a plant doesn't grow

Continued on page 4

Sheila Macqueen to Speak

Sheila Macqueen, V.M.H., author of *Flower Arranging from Your Garden*, will present a lecture and demonstration on November 5, 2:00 p.m., at the Desmond-Americana Inn, Albany. A close friend of Arboretum President Elizabeth Corning, Mrs. Macqueen will be making this trip to Albany at her request to speak on "Flower Arranging in the British Tradition".

A resident of Hertfordshire, England, Mrs. Macqueen is chief demonstrator and decorator of the Constance Spry organization. Brought up in a keen gardening family, her early interest in flowers and gardens was greatly influenced by her mother and grandmother (whose garden was visited by many European royalty, including Queen Mary, and many plant collectors). A

Continued on page 3

American Chestnuts For Members

Arboretum member Alan Rand is offering free American Chestnut seedlings to Arboretum members. Grown from seed collected here at the Arboretum, Alan is interested in sharing the trees with members willing to report on the trees' development on an annual basis. The seedlings are about one year old and will be distributed in groups of three sometime this fall.

If you would like to reserve some American Chestnuts, or learn more about this offer, contact Pamela Rowling at the Arboretum.

At the Garden

Director's Report

Gardeners are generally forward thinking. The close of the season finds them planning and looking into the coming spring already excited by new ideas for the garden. The generous donation of dwarf conifers and unusual plants by Trustee Southwick has inspired us twofold. It will provide plants for the significant expansion of the existing dwarf conifer collection. It also will provide many choice plants which will be offered in our spring '93 Rare Plant Sale. This event is being totally reworked with the specific goal of offering choice and

The George Landis Arboretum Newsletter

is published quarterly for members of the Arboretum. The GLA's mission is to provide natural history and horticultural education through programs and through its plant collections.

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Pamela H. Rowling

rare plants in smaller sizes at reasonable cost - a real bonanza for the collector or enthusiastic gardener (details in Winter '93 issue).

Fall is the harvest season and so it is at the Arboretum. As the end of the year approaches we are busily harvesting a phenomenal crop of dried flowers for sale in the Acorn Shop. Woody plant seeds also are being harvested for inclusion in the seed exchange program and for our own propagation. Fruits require cleaning and are processed for us by horticulture students at SUNY Cobleskill.

On the grounds, many small trees have been added to the collections this year. Rhododendron, Oxydendron, Clethra, Styrax, Staphylea, Viburnum and Ilex to name a few. Dave Vermilyea has spent much of his time clearing southeastern facing slopes of weedy trees and shrubs and planting the steepest of them with various conifer seedlings to protect and build soils in these fragile areas.

We still rely heavily on the labor of volunteers to maintain the grounds. Florence Grimm is to be commended for her successful Volunteer workdays. They provide fun, companionship and sense of achievement for all who attend. Occasionally we are fortunate enough to have a volunteer workcrew from the Bridge Center in Schenectady: in August a combination workday and fieldtrip successfully tackled jobs in the lilac and Van Loveland Garden areas.

Our horticultural intern from SUNY Cobleskill, Deborah Coyle, will be staying on through the winter. In addition to propagation her winter work will include spearheading efforts to revise and update maps of planted areas, updating files and labeling plants. This project is made possible due to a computer donated by Wayne and Ann B'Rells. This will be used to catalog all Arboretum plantings, all nursery holdings, herbarium and library col-

lections and accounting files. We have our work cut out for us and invite anyone interested in these projects to come join us, your help is needed.

Propagation will be aided this winter due to the misting system installed over our cutting benches by volunteer Bill Kowalski. In addition we will be installing a heating system in the facility. David and Kathie Lippitt are to be thanked for contributing the first donations towards this effort. The changing face of the greenhouse/library complex is due to Richard Law. Stone entryways and raised beds will define the planting areas here by next spring. Plantings will include a combination of dwarf conifers and alpine plants.

I must close with an expression of deepest appreciation for two people who have been so very important in the recent strides taken by the Arboretum, but who are now moving on. Science Educator Laura Lehtonen has accepted a full-time position with BOCES, Albany. She will be with us for programs through the end of this season and has agreed to stay on in an advisory capacity to aid us with educational goals and programming for the future. (We have just received notification of continued funding through the NYS ZBGA program for '93. The education committee of the Board will be searching for a person to fill this position.) Laura's skills and professionalism will be hard to match. The second person moving on, actually out of town, is Chuck Huppert. He has been our constant savior. From plumbing to carpentry, brushhogging, electrical work, planting, interior work like sheetrocking and painting to refacing the front of the barn—his contributions are too numerous to completely detail. As I write this Chuck is rebuilding the sunpit behind the Lape Homestead, making every last day here count. I truly do not know what we would have done without him. His pleasant and willing disposition will be missed. I wish him and his wife Alice all the best in their new home.

Garden Exotica

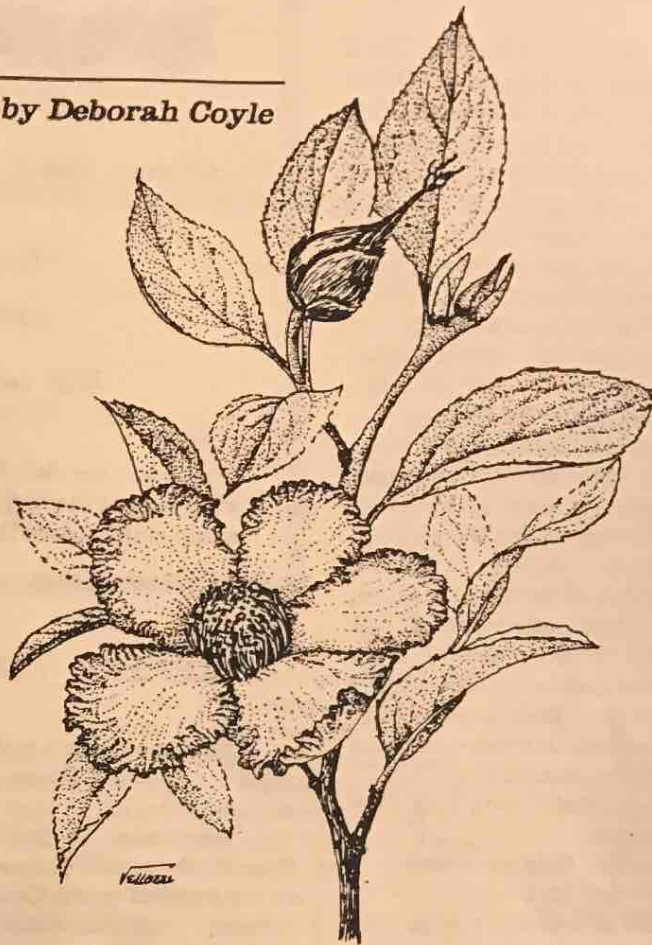
Stewartia koreana, Korean stewartia

by Deborah Coyle

Stewartia koreana is a member of the tea family Theaceae, and is one of the species of the genus *Stewartia* that grow in the eastern U.S. and eastern Asia. Introduced from Korea in 1917, the generic name honors an eighteenth century patron of botany, John Stuart, Earl of Bute (present spelling has been changed from the original form).

S. koreana is a rather rare, highly desirable, ornamental tree used for specimen plantings in the landscape. My first encounter with the tree was last spring in Massachusetts; captivated by its bark, my interest for the species began. My love has grown over the summer as I have watched the beauty of the Arboretum's specimen unfold.

Attaining an average height of 20'-30' (Everett noted as high as 50'), this pyramidal tree, small and dense, maintains an upright habit into old age. Highly prized for its bark, the trunk and main branches have a texture that is smooth and flaky, possessing a range of colors from grays and browns to orange-brown that are intermingled. This feature alone makes *S. koreana* a choice planting for the winter landscape. The leaves are dark green, simple, alternate, elliptic to broad-elliptic, and remotely serrated. In fall, the rich green foliage turns a beautiful red-purple. Take note that Dirr has noticed a range of variance regarding fall color within the species, ranging from little color to spectacular. The 3" flattened flowers, resembling camellias (Theaceae family) have 5-6 petals and are white with yellow stamens. The stamens are numerous and the styles (5) are usually united. Solitarily borne in the leaf axils on 3/4" long pedicels, the flowers bloom over a long period from June-July (at Landis, July-August). The fruit is a woody, 5-angled, dehiscent, capsule with each of the 5 chambers containing 1 to 4 seeds. Seeds are about 5mm long and dark brown.



Stewartia koreana

Hardy through Zone 5, *S. koreana* grows best in moderately moist, fertile soils, preferring sun most of the day. Planting in sheltered locations is recommended. The tree is not difficult to transplant when small (4'-5' or less) and once established requires little maintenance. Of the sources consulted, I could not find any disease or insect problems plaguing the tree.

S. koreana may be propagated by seed, softwood cuttings and possibly layering (related species suggested layering). The seed requires a double dormancy period. In Tennessee, seed planted outside in fall will germinate the second spring. I am not sure whether this will work in our temperate zone, but would like to try. Dirr suggests a 3 month cold period for indoor seeding. Softwood cuttings can also be a challenge and should not be transplanted after rooting, but allowed to go

through a dormancy period before disturbing.

Some discrepancy exists between *S. koreana* and *S. pseudocamellia*, the two being very similar. Some sources list *S. koreana* as a species of *S. pseudocamellia* (*S. pseudocamellia* var. *koreana*) and others have listed it as a cultivar (*S. pseudocamellia* 'Korean Splendor'). To summarize the results of my research regarding the differences between the two species: *S. koreana* possesses zigzagged branches and flattened flowers with yellow filaments while *S. pseudocamellia* has straight branches with a more cup-shaped flower and white filaments.

I hope I have aroused an interest in this tree, for I feel it deserves more attention in this area for use in landscape plantings.

Deborah Coyle is an intern at the Arboretum.

Trustee gift, continued from Page 1

can vary. Genetic mutations are a common cause of dwarfing. Other causes are viral, and some plants are formed by root dwarfing characteristics. To propagate a dwarf plant part of a small-growing plant is grafted onto other root stock, a technique Dick has mastered with many decades of practice! Cuttings of prized plants are acquired by barter or purchase from other collectors; growers share information through the Conifer Society.

One of Dick Southwick's favorite plants is *Pinus strobus* 'Vercades witch's broom', a fine specimen of which is planted on the west side of the Arboretum's library. It is most interesting due to its robust nature, but it doesn't outgrow itself. It has beautiful form, is symmetric from the time of its first branching, and is easy to care for. Dick is especially proud of his *Picea mariana nana*, a dense little blue mound that after 20 years of growth still won't be over 16" in diameter.

The gift of this excellent collection of plants from Dick Southwick presents the Arboretum with not only the opportunity to create the first major new garden area here since the rehabilitation of the gardens began, but also the extraordinary challenge to organize and fund-raise. If we meet successfully this multi-faceted challenge, the Landis Arboretum will be the very fortunate proprietor of a truly special garden of dwarf and unusual plants.

Calendar

See the Fall 1992 Events and Classes for complete details on these programs.

October

- 3 Seed: Saving, Sowing and Growing
- 3 Volunteer Workday
- 10 Forestry for the Layman

November

- 5 Flower Arranging in the British Tradition; Sheila Macqueen, at the Desmond Americana, Albany



THE ACORN SHOP

END OF SEASON SALE DAYS!

Saturday, Oct. 3, 10:00-4:00

Sunday, Oct. 4, 1:00-4:00

Saturday, Oct. 10, 10:00-4:00

Great markdowns on art, books, cards!!

SPECIAL VALUE DRIED FLOWERS

—all grown at the Arboretum—

High quality statice and gomphrena, \$2.50/bunch
Strawflowers, 10 cents per stem, 13/\$1.00

Come see the fall foliage at the Arboretum and do some holiday shopping at the same time! After October 10, the shop won't be open again until Arbor Day 1993.

Garden Forum

Got any garden questions that need an answer? Share your quandaries with us!

Beginning in the next issue Tom Burbine will answer your garden questions in the Garden Forum column. Tom is an Extension Agent with Cornell Cooperative Extension-Montgomery County. Tom "discovered" the Arboretum about a year ago, and has been an avid supporter and volunteer ever since. On some volunteer workdays he has come early in order to broadcast his WGY radio show from here, gaining us some exposure on the air.

So, send us some questions to get it started! Address your inquiries to

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Arboretum Wish List

General purpose: folding tables (any size, any style)

Office: desk chairs (ergonomic, backache-preventing!)

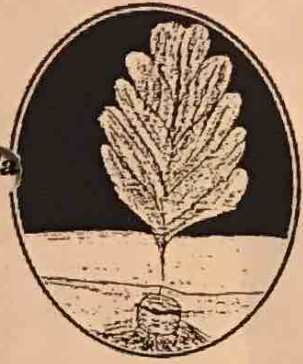
Macqueen, continued from Page 1

lifelong gardener and flower arranger, Mrs. Macqueen's remarkable abilities as a teacher have been recognized by the award of the Garden Club of America's medal for education in the field of flower arrangement.

The demonstration of "Flower Arranging in the British Tradition" by Mrs. Macqueen should serve well to introduce flower-lovers of the Albany area to Mrs. Macqueen's charms and talent. She will be making six arrangements featuring branches and foliage for holiday decorations. A master of scavenging "unusual coloured foliage, graceful tendril or weed", she transforms them into new and inspiring arrangements, presented with "charm, taste, and subtle humor".

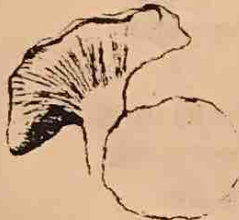
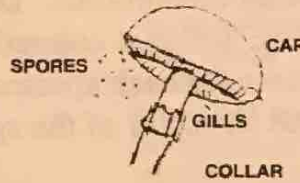
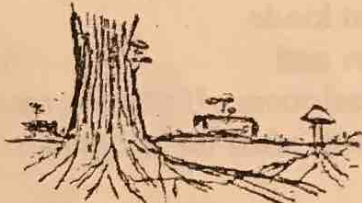
Invitations to "Flower Arranging in the British Tradition" will be mailed to Arboretum members in mid-October. Due to the rather small room booked at the Desmond we suggest you purchase tickets promptly, before the general public is notified. Tickets are \$15. After the demonstration tea will be served and guests will have time to meet Mrs. Macqueen and ask questions. We hope you will enjoy this unique opportunity to view the work of this internationally acclaimed artist.

In the Shade of the Oak



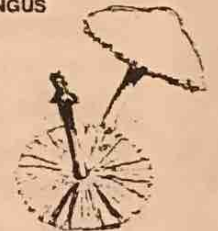
Did You Know...Mushrooms Are "Fruits"?

by Gina Ingoglia



If you look under an oak tree, you might find some mushrooms growing there. After rain, they may sprout up overnight. The mushrooms are part of a much larger plant that grows underground. It's called a fungus (**fung** is). To understand how the fungus grows, you have to understand something about the oak tree.

billions of seed-like spores that are as small as particles of dust. Spores may be pink, white, black, purple or brown. When the spores are ripe, they fall to the ground and stick to the first surface they hit. If they land on the right spot, they grow and form a long threadlike growth, which is the start of the fungus.



The oak tree's leaves contain a green substance called chlorophyll (**klor** uh fill). By using its chlorophyll with carbon dioxide, water and sunlight, the tree makes its own food. As the oak grows, it develops nuts called acorns, which are the tree's fruits. Each acorn contains one seed. When an acorn is ripe, it falls off the tree. If it lands on soft ground, it sprouts and a new oak tree begins to grow.

Many kinds of fungi produce mushrooms. Some live off bark, dead leaves, or old logs. They come in many shapes and sizes. There are some mushrooms tinier than your thumb nail; one of the largest fungi, called a giant puffball, can be more than two feet across and weigh over fifty pounds!



A fungus has no chlorophyll so it can't make its own food. It must find its food somewhere else. Some kinds of fungi (fun **gye**—the plural of fungus) get their food from oak tree roots. As the fungus grows, part of it pushes up through the ground and becomes a mushroom, which is the fungus's fruit.

Some mushrooms are good to eat. **But some mushrooms are very poisonous!** You must **never** pick a wild mushroom and eat it. If you handle mushrooms that you find outdoors, don't put you hands in your mouth before you wash them.



The best way to "collect" mushrooms is to take their pictures. Then look them up in a guide on mushrooms. You'll be amazed at how many kinds you can find.



Each mushroom contains

Mushroom Spore Prints

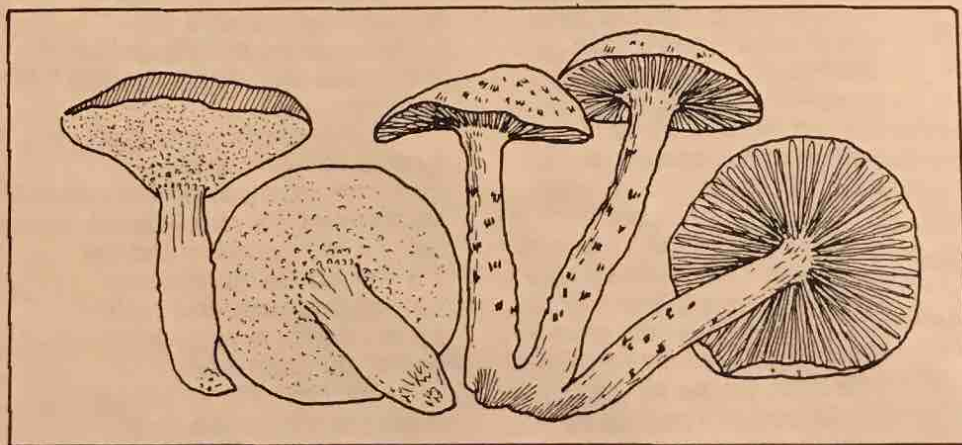
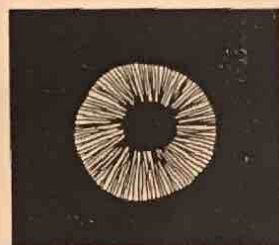
Now that you have learned how fascinating fungi can be, you may want to make a spore print.

A spore print helps mycologists (people who study fungi) identify mushrooms. Different kinds of mushrooms have different colored spores and the color is the same for each species of mushroom. If you are reading a mushroom identification book the color of the spores will often be included in the mushroom's description.

You will need:

- 1 - 2 mushrooms
- a cereal bowl or cup
- 1 sheet of light construction paper
- 1 sheet of dark construction paper

Pull the stem away from the mushroom cap. Place the cap (gill side down) on a piece of paper and place the bowl or cup over it. Leave it overnight. Gently lift the cap from the paper and you should have a spore print! Sometimes if the mushroom is too young or too old, or wet you may not have a print. Try again. The reason for dark and light construction paper is that some spores are very light in color and may produce a more visible print on dark paper.



This Native Plant

Sassafras albidum - Common Sassafras

by Pamela H. Rowling



Sassafras albidum

Throughout our lives certain things can instantly bring us back to events of long ago. Sassafras, instantly recognizable, encountered on a walk evokes for me a joyous return to childhood years. The color of the leaves, bright green above, bluish and waxy below, are striking. But the child in me sees the mitten—the three-lobed leaf—and the entire leaf pattern on this tree. Then there is the smell: scratch a stem for a spicy aromatic taste and smell unlike any other.

Now grown, Sassafras remains a favorite native tree of mine. Widely distributed, it can be found growing naturally from Massachusetts to South Carolina and West to Tennessee. Typically it is found in acid, moist, but well drained soils. Sprouts, which often occur from the

roots, may cause the formation of rather dense thickets. When small this tree may appear shrublike. Given room to grow, however, it can achieve a height of 30'-60' and spread to 40'. Branching is sympodial, giving the tree an irregular pyramidal character when mature and presenting a striking silhouette against

a winter sky. In fall it is one of our most brilliantly colored trees turning yellow to deep orange, scarlet and purple before falling, creating a multi-hued visual effect.

The flowers of Sassafras are small, yellow, fragrant and borne in dense, terminal racemes. Although not individually showy, these abundant floral clusters produced before leaves create a striking display. The blue drupe (single-seeded fruit) produced in September sits atop a bright red stalk. These fruits are usually eaten immediately by birds who relish them.

Sassafras is notoriously difficult to transplant from the wild in all but the smallest sizes. Plants propagated either from seed (requiring moist stratification) or by root cuttings (taken in late fall) and established in a pot will give best results for transplanting.

The laurel family (*Lauraceae*) includes such familiar plants as Sassafras, Sweet Bay (*Laurus nobilis*) and Camphor laurel (*Cinnamom camphora*) to name a few. Many have aromatic principles in their chemistry and are useful in cooking and medicine. The bark and roots of Sassafras are used to make a pink, pleasant-smelling tea called 'saloop'. Oil of sassafras is extracted from the roots and used for a variety of purposes.

For beauty in winter, summer and fall, for naturalized plantings and for a refreshing cup of tea and finally for the child in you - Sassafras is worthy of consideration when making your landscape plans.

Gift Challenges Arboretum Members

Starting last January member Phyllis Rosenblum has challenged members to increase their level of support when renewing their membership by offering to contribute to the Arboretum \$1 for every \$2 increase.

This invitation has been met by 52 renewing members to date, with increases ranging from \$5 to \$100. The net increase of \$1,300 is

most welcome, and the ensuing match from Phyllis is an additional delight! Thank you all for your generosity.

Unless Phyllis hollers "Uncle!" this challenge gift remains open until the end of the year. For those of you whose renewal request will appear in the last months of this year, we hope you'll take up the challenge,

How Does Our Garden Grow?

New Members (*) and Renewals June-August 1992

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Janet Marie Yeates*

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All Seasons Tree Service
Fort Orange Garden Club
Yunck's Nursery, Inc.

Sponsor

Beaumont Gardens
Bethlehem Garden Club
Blue Creek Garden Club
Dutch Valley Garden Club
Garden Club of East Schodack
Pamela Hart Landscape Service*
Quelques Fleurs Garden Club

Matching Gifts

AT&T
General Electric
New York Telephone
Sterling Winthrop
Times Mirror

Volunteers

Volunteer Notes

by Florence Grimm

While volunteers have been an important part of the Arboretum's existence for a long time, we are just completing two years of being organized. I hope there is as much satisfaction on the part of the volunteers as there is for me: look at what we've done! For example, look at the Acorn Shop...the rainy March Workday accomplished so much towards the opening of the shop. The gift shop has been pleasantly successful in its first season and is an important addition to the Arboretum. Volunteers staffing the shop have reported meeting many interesting people while on the job and have, at the same time, provided a nice human contact for our weekend visitors.

The rewards of volunteer service are "something personal". When young children come up to a weeder and comment on how beautiful the whole place is and how much fun was had looking at everything, the weeding job takes on a new dimension and a great amount of satisfaction.

The Volunteer Recognition Barbecue was well attended despite the rain. We are a hardy bunch! Thanks go out to the Trustees and Staff for this enjoyable evening. Lois

Hodges' story telling was an unexpected treat for the gathering.

Rain was also a factor in the Mettawee Theater performance. As Ron Neadle was collecting money in the driveway, Bill Kowalski was directing parking in the field, trying to avoid losing vehicles in mud. All of which went fine until a very late-arriving school bus pulled in and drove directly into the mud between the drive and the upper pond before we could get to them. So, we owe many thanks to neighbor Sam Jackson for pulling the bus out with his BIG tractor. (The rain held off, by the way, until the final applause, which became a standing/running ovation as the audience scampered through the downpour!)

The wet season has made everything grow, and to keep up with

the weeding has been impossible. By now the September 12 Workday will have tackled weeding and mulching the rhodie and lilac gardens as well as numerous other projects.

The October 3 Workday will concentrate on putting the deer protection cages on the rhododendrons and other getting-ready-for-winter work.

A special thanks to an unsung hero: Ruth Farrell has been quietly plugging away at the herbarium and has catalogued 1,798 specimens, almost half the collection. Wow!

New volunteers are always welcome! Don't think heavy field work is all that's needed—try potting in the greenhouse, writing for the newsletter, serving on a committee (e.g. fundraising), or just about anything you can name. Don't be bashful, give it a try.

Volunteer Opportunities

Tour Coordinator

Plan bus trips to gardens and shows, make travel arrangements, handle reservations. Needs to be planned far in advance, but most work can be done at home. Benefits: you get to go to great places!

Volunteer Calendar

Noted English floral arranger Sheila Macqueen will demonstrate at a fundraiser for the Arboretum on Nov. 5. To be held at the Desmond, the lecture and tea will need about half a dozen volunteers. Please call the office right away if you would like to help out at and enjoy this special event.

CANCELLATION: There will be no workday in November.

Yes, I would like to become a member of the George Landis Arboretum in the following category;

\$15 Member \$25 Sponsor or Garden Club \$50 Supporter 100+ Patron

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ made payable to the George Landis Arboretum

Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

Address _____ Home Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I would like to volunteer. (Please circle the type of work you are interested in, or write in your suggestion.)

Field Work: mowing, weeding, pruning, etc.

Office Work/Projects: word processing, writing (newsletter, other publications), fund-raising, herbarium/library, mailings

Events/Programs: adult education, youth education (e.g. field trip guide), slide show presenter, Saturday Lecture Series (Host or Lecturer), plant sales, special events

Please mail to: Director, George Landis Arboretum, P.O. Box 186, Esperance, New York 12066

Gardener's Workshop

Fertilizing Trees

by Anne Best

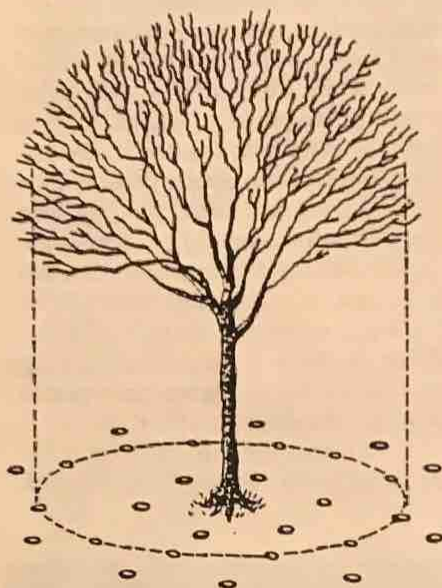
Part II: When and how to apply fertilizers. Many gardeners make the mistake of applying fertilizer and mulch in a small circle around the base of the tree. Tree roots, however, generally extend at least to the outer edge of the foliage cover (known as the dripline) and frequently far beyond it. For best results you should fertilize the entire zone within the dripline and a few feet beyond the dripline.

Trees may be fertilized in late fall or early spring. Fall applications should not be made until all possibility of top growth is past. Fall applications have the advantage in that some nutrients will enter the roots immediately and some in the spring. The remainder will be available later. Tree roots always become active before the buds begin to swell, and fertilizers already in place can be more quickly used. Fertilizer applications in the spring may be made from the time the frost is out of the ground until May 1st.

Surface fertilization encourages surface feeding roots which are not desirable. On lawns broadcasting fertilizer often feeds only the grass and not the trees. Under no circumstances must dry chemical fertilizers be applied within one foot of the trunk since injury to the root collar and trunk may result.

Where possible, fertilizer should be put into the ground at a

depth of 10-12". This method should be used especially if thick lawns are competing with your trees and shrubs, making surface feeding less effective. By punching holes in the soil, using a crowbar or similar device, the fertilizer is put where it is readily available to the tree roots.



Poke holes in the ground one to two feet apart, following the dripline. Holes should be 1.5" in diameter. Fill each hole with organic fertilizer and water it in with "compost tea" or dilute fish emulsion.

If you make the decision to broadcast compost (use only where there is no lawn under the dripline of the tree) you can broadcast any time of the year at a rate of up to 10 cubic feet per 1,000 square feet.

When applying a blended organic fertilizer, cover the entire area

under the plant canopy. The application rate will vary depending on your soil's condition. A general rule of thumb is to apply 50 lbs./1,000 square feet of 3-4-3 or similar analysis organic fertilizer. (Editor's note: If you choose to use chemical fertilizers be sure to read the directions on the product.)

Flooding the area under the canopy with compost tea or a solution of fish and kelp is also effective for level planting sites. Mix the solution in a 5 gallon pail or 30 gallon trash can (depending on the size of the plant) and irrigate thoroughly. A handy method for making the "tea" is to place the well-rotted manure or other organic fertilizer into water for a few hours, stirring occasionally with a stick. (Do not pour this solution next to the trunk.) This method is especially useful during dry spells because both watering and fertilizing are combined into one operation.

Foliar feeding with kelp and fish extracts will give a quick response if a tree or shrub is stressed or growing poorly. However, foliar applications of fertilizers should generally be looked on as a supplement, not a substitute, for soil applications. Use a fine mist sprayer.

I hope this clarifies and puts into some perspective for you a few of the many approaches to fertilization of trees. I have found these methods to be easy to use and very effective while safeguarding and enhancing the environment.

Anne Best is owner of Greenspace Environmental Design, Delmar.

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