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# George Landis Arboretum NEWSLETTER

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## ON TRANSPLANTING NATIVE PLANTS TO YOUR WOODLOT

### A CASE HISTORY BY FRED LAPE

I was a farm boy. In the time of my childhood every farm boy and girl knew the native plants of the farm, both trees and shrubs, and the herbaceous vegetation under and around them. We knew them not botanically, but by their common names. Children from the local district school always went out to the near woodlots in early spring to gather a bouquet of flowers for the teacher.

I was, from the beginning perhaps, a little more interested in plants than the average child, and that interest increased with my age. When I was thirty, after ten years of teaching at Stanford University in California, I returned East and established myself on the farm where I had spent my earliest years. I had no intention of using the land. I wanted a house to live in and space around it in which to enjoy myself. My interest in the woodland plants of the area returned. The woodlot was there, as it stands today, twenty acres of primarily hemlock-beech climax forest, with an in-filtering of sugar maple, red oak, and white ash. The base rock was sandstone, the soil primarily acid. Its common understory

plants are the maple-leaved viburnum (*V. acerifolium*), a few remnants of Hobble-bush (*V. alnifolium*), False lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum*), the Round-lobed Hepatica, and Red Trillium.

I had soon begun to roam the countryside, and I soon wanted to have in my own woodlot all the plants that I saw in other woodlots or in the near native forest areas. So I began collecting. In modern parlance, you would say that I ravaged the countryside. This was in the years before urban sprawl had begun to bulldoze over woodlots and native forests for real estate developments, and endangered plant species designations were not even thought of.

I started with two of my favorites, Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria*), and the White Trillium (*T. grandiflorum*). Both grew in quantity in small but isolated woodlots near Esperance. I always transplanted in early spring when possible, so I dug several clumps of Bloodroot and planted them in sunny spots in the woodlot, and about fifteen White Trilliums, which I planted in various places throughout the woodlot, hoping that some of the places would be to their liking. My general theory was that if the plant was native to the area, all I had to do was to duplicate as near as possible its growing spot in my woodlot, where it would flower, multiply, and spread.

In the next three years my plantings increased. I brought in the Showy orchis (*O. spectabilis*), which was growing in a small spot in my

neighbor's woodlot, and the Dog-tooth violet (*Erythronium americanum*), which was growing in quantity there. Since there was a semi-swamp section in the middle of the woodlot, I collected from the state swamp land at Oak Ridge, three miles from the woodlot, and at a thousand feet higher elevation, the Pink Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), which I planted under hemlocks at the edges of the swampy area, the Cinnamon fern, the Interrupted fern, the Pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia*), the Sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), and Clintonia. I also brought into this area the Forget-me-not which was then lining the banks of Shadow Brook, the main inlet to Otsego Lake near Cooperstown.

From the other side of the Schoharie Valley, where the rock is limestone, I brought in the Painted Trillium (*T. undulatum*), and the Rattlesnake-plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*). The Painted Trillium was growing in the duff of hemlock needles under hemlocks, and I was careful to dig ten inches or more down to get bulb and root and not break the thin stem rising through the duff to light.

I also brought in from across the valley the Sharp-lobed Hepatica and the Spring-beauty (*Claytonia*), both of which grew in profusion there. And from the Schoharie flats between Central Bridge and Schoharie, the old Iroquois camping ground, I brought in the Wood anemone (*A. quinquefolia*), which was growing in quantity there along the edges of woodlots.

From the higher elevations of the county I collected Arbutus, which was growing in quantity, and the rare Hooker's orchis with its twin flat leaves and strange green flowers.

I was eager, and ignorant.

Now, fifty years later, what remains in the same woodlot? Two clumps of Bloodroot, which never started to spread until 1965, and are now self-sowing and spreading. One White Trillium. Three clumps of Interrupted fern. Two thin patches of Dog-tooth violets, rarely blooming. A little of the Forget-me-not mixed with the poison ivy in the

swamp section. Nothing else, absolutely nothing. The average persistence of the plants was about three years. Then they were gone.

Why? Because I had not realized that these native plants, though they were growing in the area, were as fussy in the growing conditions they needed as any plant from the high Himalayas. They had established themselves in native spots only because their requirements of acidity of soil, drainage of soil, amount of sunlight in the growing season, and elevation, requirements often rigid in their limits, suited them and there they had self-sown and spread. I had not duplicated these conditions, and they would have none of my woodlot.

The history of the bloodroot is particularly interesting. It obviously prefers a sunny south slope and soil either near neutral or calcareous. Why did it persist, but not spread, for thirty years in my woodlot, and then suddenly begin to spread. My only guess is that it needs not only the south sunlit slope but also some symbiotic bacteria in the soil, it slow to develop, and enough not brought in with the original plants - Fred Lape

## IN MEMORIAM

MAYNARD LOUX 1908-1983



With the passing in April of 1983 of Maynard Loux, the arboretum lost its next-to-last connection with George Landis, the man whom the arboretum honors. Now, only Fred Lape remains of those connected with the arboretum who knew George Landis.

Maynard joined the R.P.I. faculty in 1942 where he and George Landis taught, and soon became friends. Through George Landis, Maynard met Fred Lape and for the next forty years Maynard came regularly to "the farm" as he always called it, even long after it had become the Landis Arboretum.

When the arboretum was incorporated, Maynard was one of the original trustees, and he served continuously on the board until the spring of 1983 when he moved to Florida to better cope with his declining health. But, it was not to be, and only two weeks after moving south, Maynard passed away.

His work on behalf of the arboretum was constant. His support was regular and substantial, and he represented one of the few remaining links between the past and the present of the Landis Arboretum. Now, his visits to "the farm" are over. He will be missed, and he cannot be replaced. - Kenneth DeKay

## FRIENDS NEWS

Ground has been broken - literally - for an herb garden at the arboretum. The 10 x 30 foot plot, located in back of the library just off the path to the Big Oak, will initially be planted in rows and bordered with artemesia.

Peg Brown, a member of the Herb Society of America, is planning and planting the garden with the help of Margaret Law. The garden design will be amended as the number of varieties increases, and products from the garden will be dried and offered for sale this fall. Peg and Margaret will welcome donations of plants and cuttings - and volunteer labor. (Phone Margaret Law, 463-5256.)

The slide program "Through the Year at the Landis Arboretum" is available as a 30-slide presentation with an 18 minute narration by former WGY-WRGB personality Earle Pudney, and as an 80-slide in-person presentation by Trustee Margaret Law.

Another slide program, entitled "Tree Flowers" by Merrill Bousman should also be available soon.

There is no charge for either presentation. Telephone Margaret Law (463-5256) for further information.

## CALENDAR CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS



James Bates will replace Keith Kohanski for the June 25 program "Berrying Shrubs for Home Gardens." The July 16 wildflower slides are entitled "A Walk in the Woods", photographed by Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Wellborn, and narrated by Merrill Bousman. "Why an Herbarium?" by Peter Kaskeski will be presented at 10 a.m., September 24.

## MEMBERSHIP CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Schmelzer should be added to the list of 1982 Sponsors printed in the last newsletter. The listing for Mary A. Westendorp, should read Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Westendorp; Mrs. Mary E. Van Oosten should read Von Oostenbrugge.

## ROCK GARDEN PLANTS TO KNOW AND GROW

This article by Kathie Lippitt is Part II of "Turface, Scree, and Paper Rocks" which appeared in the last issue. This article was reproduced and made available to potential purchasers of rock garden plants at the arboretum's Rare Plant Sale Day because, due to the vagaries of the editor and the postal service, this issue will arrive in your home after June 11.)

Some rock garden plants grow best in sand. In my own garden there is *Acantholimon*, which you will have to order but it's well worth it. I have *A. venustum* in sand only since 1978. It grows to a foot in diameter and 2" to 3" tall in full sun, and it's pink flowers add a couple of inches when it blooms in June and July.

*Opuntia fragilis* may bloom for me this year. Newer growth breaks off at the swish of a cat's tail, or is it a chipmunk dashing along? It does travel.

*Draba*, *Alyssum*, *Arabis*, *Phoenicaulis*, and other members of the Mustard Family want a very lean diet; a spot in sand suits them. *Ptilotrichum spinosum*, another of the Mustards, is one of the lovelies of my June garden. The spininess is in the tip of the branches after leaf fall; it blooms rose, pink and white.

I have had one *Erigonum* get ram-bunctious on a sand bed, but most of the others are quite short and haven't begun to get their breadth yet.

Robust plants should be watched; keep them away from little treasures. Try *Geranium sanguineum v. lancastriense*. There are lots of geraniums, and they are nice plants, but they are big.

*Geranium dalmaticum* is quite different from some of the roaming ones. It stays put at a stocky 5" tall and 12-15" across.

Try *Geum Borisii* with its red-orange bloom, and *Hippocrepis comosa*, which isn't spectacular, but it has bright yellow pea-like flowers in summer. Try *Phlox subulata*; douglasia and some of the other westerners are very difficult, very small by comparison, if they even survive long enough to compare.

Three plants in my garden seed themselves all around but can be pulled up easily: a summer alyssum that blooms when nothing else is, a Johnny-jump-up for early spring jollity, and *Penstemon hirsutus pygmaeus*, an eastern U.S. native which delights me by seeding wherever it lands.

*Erica* and *Calluna* are burned by the wind if not covered by snow all winter. Be sure to plant them in an area with acid soil.

Several plants are terrific for walls, among them *Campanula portenschlagiana* which blooms from early summer to late fall. *Crassula milfordiae* has been perking along well in the wall

around my sand bed. Sedums are nice plants the first year or so, but then the leaves fall to the ground and root. Taking them out can mean that more leaves are lost, which, in turn, root, giving more plants. *Sempervivum arachnoideum* has many different forms - look for them.

There are a world of primroses with differing requirements, but first try the *veris*, *Auricula*, *polyantha*, *denticulata*, *frondosa*, *vulgaris* in rich, slightly shady, moist soil.

*Paxistima Canbyi* is a very nice shrub which roots as it goes, giving cuttings to exchange with friends. There are many, many dwarf conifers - they are choice additions to any rock garden. Placed just a bit southeast of a plant, they offer good shade to a plant that wants it.

*Aquilegia flabellata nana* and all the little columbines are beloved by rock gardeners.

*Armeria juniperifolia* is a little dear, with short, stocky stems, grass-like foliage, and pink or rosy bloom.

*Dianthus* are many, they are all good bloomers, from the tall one-foot garden pinks to the tiny alpines.

*Edraianthus*, *Campanula*, *Jasione*, *Phyteuma* are all in the Bellflower Family. Most, if not all, are blue, blue-purple or white, a long-blooming group after some of the jolly earlier colors are gone. *Platycodon*, with its light pink flowers, is a nice plant to have in the background. If the plant is cut early in the year, it will have several stalks, and perhaps it won't grow to the usual two-plus feet tall.

*Dodecatheon*, or Shooting-star, was a favorite of mine as a little girl. It likes dampness and grows in muddy places.

*Erigerons* are little plants in the Aster Family, some from the European Alps, and some from the

western U.S. that are hard to keep in the garden for long.

*Anemones* begin with *blanda*, the very early blooming blue and pink, and foliage which dies down almost as soon as the last petal falls. *A. nemorosa*, the European Wood anemone, *A. quinquefolia*, the American Wood anemone, and *A. canadensis*. There are a great number of anemones, none of them the less hardy florists' big-blossomed sorts.

*Gypsophila nana*, *G. petraea*, *G. cerastoides*, *G. repens* are all long-blooming plants displaying flowers of white and pink throughout the summer.

*Iris cristatus alba* was one of my early rock garden plants. It prefers shade, but it has done quite well in sun for me. *Iris tectorum* was an early plant that I grew from seed. One bright spring day, I took it from its hot window in our house and put it outside in the ground, killed it - and then I learned how to harden plants off properly.

*Potentilla verna nana* covers itself with big yellow bloom in spring; *P. tridentata* is a native with small white blooms on most handsome dark green foliage; *P. atrosanguinea* has larger silky leaves, blooms much later with orange flowers nestled close to the leaves.

*Saxifragas* come in bewildering hordes. The encrusted saxes, the mossies, the *Englerias*, and the *Kabschia* are four general classifications. They all want cool roots and sunny leaves. I have always grown mine in the shade of a tree, but not underneath it. Recently, however, I have seen them to the side of a very small conifer, where they are thriving.

Plant sources: Daystar Nursery, Litchfield-Hallowell Road, RD 2, Litchfield, ME 04350; Rice Creek Gardens, 1315 66th Avenue N.E., Minneapolis, MN 55432; Rocknoll Nursery, 9210 U.S. 50, Hillsboro, Ohio 45133; Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery, 2825 Cummings Road, Medford OR 97501

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## RECOMMENDED READING

"How to Grow Wildflowers and Wild Shrubs and Trees in Your Own Garden" is a beautifully written, 300-page volume that pleads, with style, the case for saving native American plants from extinction.

The author, Hal Bruce, formerly Taxonomist at Winterthur Gardens in Delaware, and lately Assistant Professor of English at the University of Delaware, describes the cultural needs of wildflowers, shrubs and trees of the Eastern United States; how to choose and plant for color and blooming times; how to plan and plant special gardens, for example a pond or a bog. And, as part of an appendix listing sources for wildflowers, Mr. Bruce clearly and pragmatically defines the responsibility of the wildflower collector, whether that collector is an individual gardener or a professional nurseryman.

The author has an enormous knowledge and appreciation of plants, and he has the ability to stir the reader to actually *see* - and to begin to understand - what it is that our natural environment offers us. The few simple line drawings complement Mr. Bruce's rich word descriptions.

Undoubtedly this is a book for plant enthusiasts. One wishes it were a book for everyone. - Ed.

(Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, 1982. Paperback \$9.95.)

Publishing deadlines are the first of February, May, August, and November. You may write or phone me at the address below.

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