

# THE NEWSLETTER LANDIS ARBORETUM

Esperance, New York

SPRING 2002

VOLUME 21, NO. 2



## Spring Plant Sale To Feature Native and Asian Maples

**Saturday and Sunday  
May 18-19, 10 am to 4 pm  
Rain or Shine!**

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*by Lawson Harris, Plant Sale Committee Chair*

**P**reparations for our 30TH Spring Plant Sale, intended as the major fund-raiser of the year, are nearing completion.

#### **New this Year**

This year we will have available a larger than usual number of trees and shrubs, including a wide range of native and oriental maples (see article on page 8); and the usual excellent selection of perennials and annuals.

On Saturday only, members of the Garden Volunteers Committee will be holding a bake sale. In addition to the traditional cookies and brownies, a variety of herb breads will be available. Proceeds of the sale will help to upgrade the gardens at the Arboretum.

Raffle tickets for a handsome, sturdy potting bench will be sold at the sale. The drawing will be held on Sunday. (see article on page 5.)

#### **More of the Same (but better)**

The plant sales are a major source of income for the Arboretum—an opportunity for you to help the Arboretum while acquiring beautiful and unusual plants, shrubs, and trees to improve your home environment. We hope for good weather during the sale days, and plan to make the sale a positive experience for everyone regardless of the weather. Come—rain or shine!

Ample parking, bathrooms (wheelchair accessible at the Meeting House near the parking lot) are available for your convenience. Food and coffee, tea, soda, fruit drinks and water can be purchased at the snack bar. Picnic tables are available. Come and enjoy the grounds as well as the plant sale.

We are seeking donations of desirable and healthy plants from members for the sale. We do need to have donated plants ready for the sale table—there is not time for volunteers to repot or groom the plants. The Arboretum can supply standard-sized containers for your use, and plants should be clearly labeled. Call the office, 518-875-6935, for information.

There are many opportunities for volunteers to help during the five days of preparation preceding the sale and on the sale days. The Arboretum's office staff would be pleased to help you sign up for periods convenient to you.

#### **Sad but True**

To discourage unauthorized removal of sale plants, we need people who would like to camp at the Arboretum one or more nights from Wednesday, May 15 to Saturday, May 18. Members owning motor homes or other recreational vehicles might find useful a short early-season shakedown cruise to the Arboretum.

#### **Members Only Preview Party**

The members-only "Pick of the Pots" preview party will be held on Friday evening, May 17, from 5 pm till dusk. Members can pick up their advance orders, review and purchase additional sale plants, and socialize over a light hot and cold buffet supper. The charge for this popular event is \$10 per member, \$45 for new members. (includes the preview party admission. We will enroll new members at the door. Advance registration is requested by May 13. Call 518-875-6935 to register. Supper will be limited to 150 people.

THE LANDIS ARBORETUM NEWSLETTER is published quarterly for its members. The Arboretum's mission is to provide natural history and horticultural education through its programs and through its plant collection.

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# FROM THE garden

The Arboretum looks spectacular in May. The lilac, rhododendron and crabapple collections are some of our most popular because of their colorful and fragrant displays, but many other trees, shrubs and perennials put on a show and Landis is worth frequent visits.



Photo by Fred Breglia

Another area of special activity includes funding. We've recently received the following grants and underwriting: Stewarts Christmas Wish funding; Free Family Programs with George Steele, \$100; Tom Gage Electrical, underwriting for our Sam Whedon concert on July 13, \$150; General program support from Schoharie County, \$1000; Town of Esperance, improvements to our main parking area, \$500; Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Sharon Springs, funding for our Free Family Programs, \$500; Iroquois Gas Transmission System, Land Enhancement and Acquisition Fund

(LEAF) grant for interpretive signage, \$8,800. We are grateful to these businesses and municipalities for their generous support.

In March and April, I spent two days with students at Schoharie High School. For the last few years Mr. Barnes' English classes have helped area non-profit organizations as part of fulfilling curriculum requirements. This year Mr. Cummings' students joined in the project. Students create brochures, fliers, posters or PowerPoint presentations for four non-profits each year. The first day involved interviews each period by a group of students. The students learn about the organizations and determine what promotional materials are needed by the organizations. On the second day each group presented its materials, in lively competition with the other classes. This year we will have fliers and posters for a variety of our programs and events developed by these enthusiastic students. Thank you Mr. Barnes and Mr. Cummings.

Diana Panhorst, a new and knowledgeable volunteer, has organized this year's garden tour series. See the article below. Thanks for all your help, Diana.

## SPECIAL EVENTS & Classes —more Special Events & Classes on page 9

### Second Annual Garden Tour Series

By Diana Panhorst and Gloria Van Duyne

Last year's successful garden tours have led to more gardens to explore this year. Four distinctly different gardens are open on a separate day so visitors may enjoy and learn about each garden at leisure.



**Liz Bowder's Cottage Garden** uses curved borders and island beds filled with shrubs, perennials, and old roses to make a once-average suburban lot extraordinary. Mixed plantings are used to provide interest with both foliage and flower. Of note are unusual alliums and hellebores, old roses and clematis. This is a great opportunity to see the possibilities of what can be done without a tremendous amount of space. Sunday June 9, 12-5pm, Niskayuna.

**Jennifer Brunenkant** created an urban playroom complete with pool, hot tub, bar and kitchen garden from a suburban development lot with only birch, maple and pine six years ago. Today the front yard path winds through color and texture with subtly placed trees and shrubs that camouflage

views of the surrounding neighborhood. The backyard is a garden playroom. Trees, vines, and fencing that provide privacy and structure. Her interests include shapely conifers, grasses, Japanese elements, weeping cherry, elm, and beds chock full of perennials and annuals. She also maintains an edible garden with fruits, herbs and berries. Sunday, June 23, 12-5pm, Latham.

Comment last year was unanimous. One visit to **David and Olivia Skory's** collection was not enough to fully appreciate their garden so we included it again this year. The Skory's garden was begun in 1989 with planting in hard-to-mow places: a hillside and where tree roots damaged lawn mower blades. After the garden grew to mammoth size, Olivia studied garden and landscape design in London for a year. On her return, the conifer garden, among others, was completely redone. The gardens rely mostly on shape, color and texture of leaves to provide year round interest and blossoms are a happy bonus. A bog and woodland shade garden have been added recently. This garden boasts about 800 species, including trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and bulbs.

—more on page 9

# COLLECTIONS News

by Fred Breglia, Head of Horticulture and Operations

Spring is a season of joy, excitement and anticipation. This year is no exception. The first early flowers of spring have emerged in the Van Loveland perennial garden. Winter aconite and snowdrops combine with squills and crocus to form natural floral arrangements that add dramatic color to the browns and grays of early spring. The Chinese witch-hazel is in full bloom. The cornelian cherry dogwood blossoms are ready to burst, and the forsythias are not far behind.

The past few months have been extremely busy for staff of the Landis Arboretum. Between gearing up for the coming growing season and the Spring Plant Sale, we were involved in teaching classes, preparing for and working the Capital District Flower Show and participating in the Industry Day at SUNY Cobleskill.

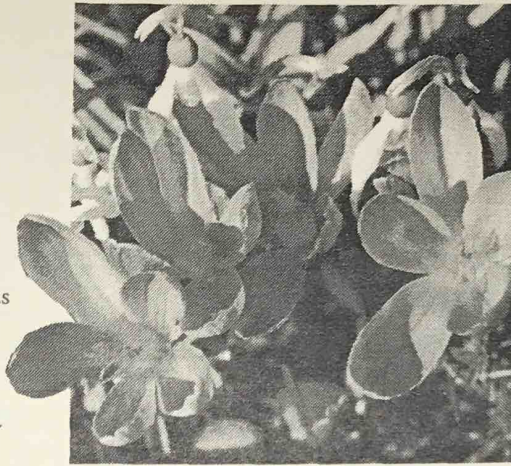
## New signs and labels

Landis Arboretum was awarded a grant from the Iroquois Pipeline to purchase and install new photo-metal interpretive signs around the grounds. These new signs will add to the visitor experience by explaining in detail, many of the environmental wonders you will be looking at. Signs will be installed in both the collection area and native woodland.

We are also working to install a pine bush ecosystem demonstration garden above the parking lot hillside, using funds we received from The Nature Conservancy and the Albany Pine Bush. Using our mature pitch pine as a foundation, we will incorporate woody shrubs and perennials to complete the ecosystem. A new interpretive sign will explain what we have in the garden. Pine bush perennials have also been added to our Van Loveland garden and should provide a few pleasant surprises this coming summer.

## Bluebirds

Landis Arboretum is a great place to see bluebirds. With increased success of our fledglings and lots of great habitat, we are called home by many of our wonderful State birds. I have been working with the Schoharie County Bluebird Society and the



*Hamamelis virginiana*, Purple crocus.

NYS Bluebird Association this year to increase our bird population. Landis is now considered an official spur from the NYS Route 20 trail as well as a Schoharie County Bluebird Trail. More volunteers will be needed to increase our monitoring as well as needed repairs and additions of nest boxes.

## Committees and contributions

The native plant committee started working on the newly added, acid bog display. This new display will be located at the corner of the field behind the greenhouse and at the start of the Woodland Trail. Plans are to add many acidic-loving plants to the bog, including pitcher plants, bog laurel, and leatherleaf. In addition, many native plants have been ordered and plans are underway to add many new natives to our already diverse natural areas.

The Garden Volunteer Committee is off to a great start with over 40 members on the list. In addition to increased maintenance of our existing gardens, there are also plans to add some other exciting new gardens to the Landis Arboretum. Call the office for more details.

The New York State Department of Correctional Services, (Camp Summit) has continued to help us clear invasive species, reclaiming hillsides and other natural areas. Large amounts of honeysuckle, black locust, and buckthorn have been removed as a result of thousands of hours of hard work.

## March report

They say the month of March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Whoever said this was not at Landis this

Photo by Sonja Javarone

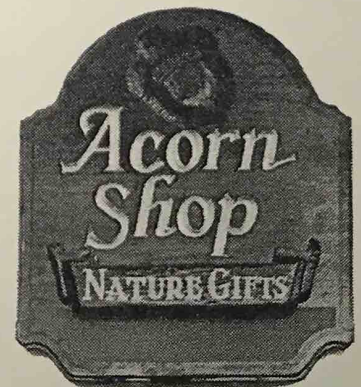
month! We had a mild start and actually got a jump on the season. Most of the gravel from this winter's snow plowing has been raked off the lawn. We've cleaned up most of the branches that came down over the winter and removed the tree wrap and stakes from our newly planted trees. I can actually say that we were ahead for the season.

Unfortunately March went out like a lion. A bad ice storm hit on the 26<sup>TH</sup> and 27<sup>TH</sup>, resulting in more damage than I have seen since my hire in May of 1998. We lost a few of our Notable Trees, including the laurel willow. Many large native trees were downed along with countless branches. On the bright side, most of our prized specimens came through unharmed, including our Great Oak which didn't lose a branch. I have already propagated branches off the laurel willow, which will replace our original Fred Lape-planted specimen. Landis Arboretum staff, volunteers and the Camp Summit Crew began chopping and sawing fallen trees and branches right away. Clean-up continues with many more hours of work ahead of us. If you are willing to pitch in, give me a call and we can set up a time.

Mother Nature's still the boss and sometimes likes to pull rank. I will leave you with this quote.

"I went to talk to the king. There was an old man in my neighborhood, that lived in a hollow tree; I should have talked to him first."

—Henry David Thoreau, 1817–1862



**The Acorn Shop is open!  
Enjoy your visit and  
start your holiday shopping early!**

## WISH LIST

We are looking for the following items (or estimated dollar amount to purchase items).

### Books

*The Ortho Problem Solver*, edited by Michael Smith (\$200)

### Equipment

- Picnic tables and benches. (\$250)
  - Very, very small chainsaw (\$150)
  - Small hand mower (\$150)
  - Large commercial mower (\$4000)
  - D.R. brush mower (\$2500)
  - Hardback rakes, shovels, loppers, and mulch fork (\$200)
  - Four-wheel drive pickup in good shape
  - Troy Built hand cart
- And always, the large tractor—
- A John Deere 790 (or machine of equal quality) 4wd, 30hp, with backhoe and loader. (\$20,000)

### Acorn Shop

- clear plastic containers for storage:  
Three 6" deep x 11" high x 26" long  
Ten 9" deep x 11" high x 15-18" long
- 10 x 12 foot jute carpet in cream, tan or light beige color
- A few good painters. Call the office for more information

## Project Wish List

We are looking for volunteers familiar with the following tasks (or equivalent dollar amount to complete these projects).

- Stone walkways to and from the farmhouse need rebuilding. (\$1000)
- Stone walls around the greenhouse and walls around perennial garden need rebuilding. (\$800)
- We are looking for someone who is good with small engines to help with machine maintenance.

## HORTICULTURIST'S Corner

by Fred Breglia, Head of Horticulture and Operations

# Mulching: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly!

This is a new column dealing with problems of horticulture and arboriculture. Many incorrect practices are common today. Frequently homeowners and professionals do some very bad things with good intentions. This series of articles will address the a few of the problems that are affecting our landscapes as well as provide solutions.

—Fred Breglia

### The Good.

The proper application of mulch can significantly improve the overall health and vigor of trees and other plants. On the other hand, mulch that is applied incorrectly can stress and potentially kill plants. Homeowners and professionals alike should be aware of the many benefits that mulch provides and potential problems associated with over-mulching.

Benefits of mulch include regulating temperatures, conserving water, keeping weeds and grass roots from competing with trees and shrub roots, and helping to prevent injuries from lawn mowers and weed-whackers.

In general, organic mulch choices are the best. Organic mulch is usually derived from plants or plant parts. Examples include bark, wood chips, pine needles, and leaves. Keep in mind that raw wood chips and hardwood bark can actually take nutrients from the soil and should be partially decomposed before use.

Mulch should be applied 2-4 inches in depth, around the root systems of trees and shrubs. Take care to make sure the root flare (region where trunk and roots meet) is not covered. This area must be free of mulch. Feeder roots stretch out to the drip-line of a plant and beyond, and mulch can be applied to cover the whole root system.

### The Bad.

Too much of a good thing can be bad. Mulch applied in excess of five inches or more is not only a waste of mulch but has become a significant cause of death of landscape plants. There are several reasons why woody and herbaceous plants become stressed and die as a result of excessive mulching. Over-mulching can cause death of above ground trunk flares, can lower

soil temperatures during critical root growth periods, promote stem girdling from rodents, can reduce soil aeration, (which directly affects plant respiration), and can promote excessive soil moisture leading to root rot.

### The Ugly.

The practice of over-mulching landscape plants continues to be a common reason plants eventually die. Sometimes over-mulching results in building up of mulch around the trunks of many ornamentals. I like to call this the "Volcano Syndrome." This refers to the piled-up mulch around a tree's or shrub's trunk and trunk flare, forming large mulch mountains. The trunk flare of a tree is designed to be at ground level and free of soil and mulch. Keeping this section of a plant under mulch will cause stress, leading to more insects and diseases which will eventually lead to plant death.

While proper use of mulch is one of the most beneficial things a plant health care provider can do, we must be aware of the problems associated with over-mulching. As the "Volcano Syndrome" continues to plague the modern landscape, it is more important than ever, to educate landscape maintenance providers about the perils of this practice. For more in-depth information on proper mulching, volunteer for a few hours at the Arboretum. Call the office, 518-875-6935, to arrange a time.



No "Volcano Syndrome" in this tree's future!

Photo by Paul Blair



Recovering a perennial garden from this devastation is a long and difficult task. The last stump was finally burned in the spring of 2001; the picket fence remains to be reconstructed. This summer, the stump holes will be filled and the fence mended. Unless the drought continues, some areas will be seeded and others planted with perennials and roses during the 2002 gardening season. Once a shade garden, the new garden will receive full sun for most of the day—once established, this new garden may be featured in a garden tour.

Photo by Fran Finkbeiner

## A Second Life

by Herm Finkbeiner

*“We work with boards from these trees, to fulfill their yearning for a second life, to release their richness and beauty. From these planks we fashion objects useful to man, and if nature wills, things of beauty. In any case, these objects harmonize the rhythms of nature to fulfill the tree’s destiny and ours.”*

—George Nakashima, *The Soul of a Tree*

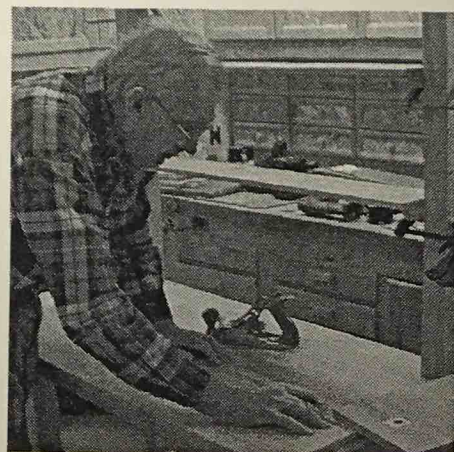
On January 19, 1996 a wicked storm uprooted several black locust trees in the yard of Ken and Carol Wock who live on a windy hilltop in Saratoga County. The winds lifted part of Carol’s perennial beds skyward in a way not intended by any garden designer. (See photo. above)

At the time Carol was president of the Landis Arboretum Board of Trustees, where she was absorbed in the day-to-day operation of the organization during the transition from one director to another. The Wock’s across-the-road neighbors, Fran and Herm Finkbeiner, also Landis members, sympathized with Carol’s and Ken’s predicament... and suggested that perhaps members of the Northeastern Woodworkers Association might salvage part of the trees and find a use for the wood.

In May 1996 NWA members Ron DeWitt from Salem, NY, who owns and operates a portable sawmill, Jim English, also an arboretum member from Canajoharie, Earl Liberty from Albany, and Herm Finkbeiner, sweated, sawed and carried boards for drying. They were stacked and stickered, and after two years of drying, the wood was ready for use.

Herm has made a potting bench from the locust wood retrieved from the Wock’s yard to be raffled for the benefit of Landis Arboretum. Black locust is very attractive as a material, but hard, tough, difficult-to-work-with-wood, suitable for making sturdy objects. Made to come apart for easy moving, the bench is 68 inches long, 23 inches wide and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick. Tickets are available at \$1 each or six for \$5.

at the Spring Plant Sale, or at the arboretum office. The drawing will be held at the Spring Plant Sale on Sunday, May 19. (Herm also made a workbench from the locust—one of those “dream” benches that woodworkers covet—which was shown and raffled at NWA’s SHOWCASE in Saratoga Springs in 2000.)



**Herm Finkbeiner at work. The new potting bench takes shape.**

Photo by Fran Finkbeiner

## MANY THANKS

to the following people  
for their generous gifts  
and continuing support.

IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER...

**Bret Morey** of RDB Inc—for generously giving his time to set up our new computer and work on our old computer, and donating a new scanner.

**Diane Jankowski**—for the t-shirt display rack for the Acorn Shop

**Barbara Hunt**—for the cabinet for the Acorn Shop

**Jane Kirstel, Judith Lott, Barbara Hunt, and Gloria Van Duynes**—for painting the Acorn Shop

**Herm Finkbeiner** for buying our new computer.

**Diana Panhorst**—for organizing this year's garden tours and producing the brochure.

**Everyone**—who volunteered at the Capital District Garden Show

ON-GOING

**Fran Finkbeiner**—for her editorial help and layout of promotional materials

**Sue Gutbezahl**—for her design and layout of our newsletter and numerous brochures

**Terry Staley and Sonja Javarone**—Contributions of beautiful photos of Landis flora, fauna, events, and buildings

**All the volunteers** who spent precious time and contributed valuable expertise, equipment, and money to help maintain and further the mission of the Landis Arboretum.



Photo by Sonja Javarone

## Bottlebrush Buckeye

### *Aesculus parviflora*

#### An Unknown Master of Summer and Fall Display

by Chris Cash, SUNY Cobleskill

A summertime stroll around the grounds of the arboretum may find you walking past this large mounding shrub adorned with spikes of white flowers that are attracting a menagerie of butterflies, moths, and bees. A walk through the same area in the fall will find you drawn to the dramatic yellow fall color and brown capsule fruits that replace the summer flowers.

In the spring of the year the bottlebrush buckeye is an unimpressive massive shrub with coarse foliage, leggy stems and dried fruit stalks. The spring look could make a person ask a simple question, "Why would anyone plant this?" With the onset of summer this plant comes alive and shows its character. It will bloom throughout summer, is relatively pest free, will withstand varied soil conditions and provides dependable fall color display.

Rarely found in the garden center and of limited availability in many nurseries, this plant has much to offer but has little distribution in the trade. As a plant in a garden center, it is not a plant that will sell itself. It won't bloom in the spring shopping season and is a gangly youth-like plant in a pot. This plant is worth using in your garden. It will provide many years of exceptional summer and fall color with almost no care. The caution? We are talking about a mas-

sive shrub; in its native habitat it is 15 feet wide and 12 feet high.

Is it worth trying in your garden? Let's start with the fact that this is an award winning plant. In 1999, the prestigious Pennsylvania Horticulture Society recognized bottlebrush buckeye as a Gold Medal Plant Award winner. In 1998 the plant received two awards, the Kentucky Theodore Klein Plant Award and the Georgia Gold Medal Award. Our own Landis Arboretum recognizes it in its Notable Trees Collection.

So what is it about the bottlebrush that prompts organizations to recognize it as a prized garden specimen? First, consider a bit of background and history. Bottlebrush buckeye is a shrub of the Hippocastanaceae; the most noted plant of this family is the horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). This plant is a tree that is popular in many parts of the world and is not native to the United States. The bottlebrush

buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) is a southern native of the *Aesculus* genus and one of the few shrubs in the genus.

In 1788 botanist Thomas Walter first identified *Aesculus parviflora*, bottlebrush buckeye. The plant was found to be native from South Carolina through Alabama to Georgia and northern Florida, with the most significant native population in Alabama. Although native to the southeast, this plant is comfortable growing in upstate New York to the hardiness zone of USDA 4. It is a stoloniferous plant that spreads by underground shoots that sprout and grow. Rehder, in 1919, described the only known form of this plant, *Aesculus parviflora serotina*. This plant flowers two to four weeks later than the species. *Aesculus parviflora* 'Rogersi' is the first and only named cultivar of bottlebrush buckeye. The species sports upright flowers that are 12 inches long while the 'Rogersi' cultivar displays pendulous flowers from 18–30 inches long.

The plants bloom reliably in July and August. After the bloom is complete, one inch rounded brown fruits replace the flowers. If you are interested in growing the fruits you must be very attentive to the maturation date. When the seeds fall from the plants squirrels will quickly gather the good seed and leave the empty seeds. The good seeds must be collected immediately

and planted immediately; they will fail if planting is delayed. In the fall the root will sprout while the top of the seedling will stay dormant until the spring growing season.

Some important points about the fruits. The fruits and foliage of plants of the *Aesculus* genus are poisonous and should be kept away from children. Written documents seem to indicate that bottlebrush buckeye is not as much of a problem as the common horsechestnut. The bottlebrush buckeye often will fruit poorly and apparently with fewer toxins in the fruit. Some medical studies indicate that products of the fruits have promise for the treatment of circulatory disorders.

Following are a few simple points of interest with regard to buckeyes or horsechestnuts. The names "horsechestnut" and "buckeye" have been disputed over the years. In 1924, the American Joint Committee on Horticultural Nomenclature met and decided to settle the dispute. They ruled that it would be best to call all American species buckeyes and resembling a buck's eye. And what is the origin of the name bottlebrush? The flowers of bottlebrush buckeye look like a common household bottle brush, the appearance because the flower spikes have extremely long stamens that protrude well past the petals.

Bottlebrush buckeye has a unique history of discovery. Thomas Walter who described and collected the plant in 1787, was preparing a manuscript ("The Flora of Caroliniana") when he died in 1788. As luck would have it, noted botanist John Fraser met Thomas Walter in 1787 and Fraser added 420 species to the 640 Walter had already collected. Upon Walters' passing, Fraser returned to his homeland of England with thousands of plant specimens and Walters' unpublished manuscript. Fraser spent the next year working to publish the manuscript and then went on to establish a nursery in London with the purpose of growing and distributing native plants of America. Possibly bottlebrush buckeye began its journey of distribution as a horticultural plant at this time. Maybe.

In summary, bottlebrush buckeye is a plant of the Hippocastanaceae or horsechestnut family. It belongs to the *Aesculus* genus, has one form, the late blooming *A. serotina*, and one cultivar, *A. 'Rogersi'*, with long pendulous flowers. The plant is stoloniferous, resistant to deer browse, and flowers with spikes 12 inches tall and 3 inches wide. Pink stamens extend beyond the white petals like bottle brushes. The palmately

compound foliage emerges in spring with a bronze coloration and quickly turns to a dark green color. By fall light-brown seeds form on the branch tips. Fall brings on a splash of bright yellow color and followed by a winter look of a bold upright spread in a mound that easily withstands what the season serves it.

Bottlebrush buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) is a treasured native in the south and very much at home in the north. The Arboretum specimen near the upper entrance was planted in the spring of 1951. It was obtained from Henry, Kohankie & Son, Painesville, Ohio. It is quiet in the spring garden but impressive in form and color in the summer and fall. This is a great plant if given plenty of room to grow, a joy for the visiting squirrels and something for the deer to simply wander past.

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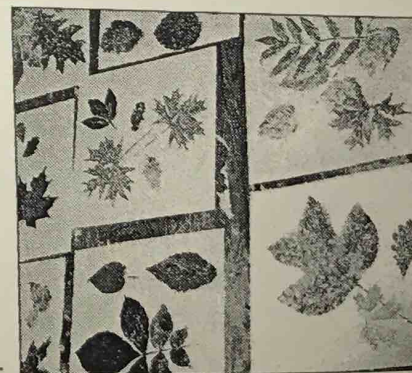
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## Annual Quilt Raffle Tickets on Sale

This year's second annual quilt raffle is particularly special to the Arboretum. Leaves collected from trees at the Arboretum were used with textile paints to create leaf prints on muslin blocks. (See photo above) These blocks have color coordinated fabric between and quilting around the leaf prints. Sonja Javarone, collected the leaves last autumn. Blocks were printed by Jane Kirstel, Carol Wock and Gloria Van Duyn. Fabric was donated by Hickory Hill Quilts. Tickets will be on sale at the Spring Plant Sale, and until December and cost \$1 each or 6 for \$5. Proceeds will benefit Landis and its programs.

## WELCOME New Members

- Joyce & Floyd Adams  
Bernard K. Allanson  
Deborah Banks  
Len, Meg, Kate and Gavin Berdan  
Sue Bove  
Anne Church  
Sally Cummings  
Sharon Dilorenzo and Peter Bowden  
Mary Anne Dunham  
Fran Heitmann  
Joyce Kapusta  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Krom  
Donald Largeau  
Dorothy Matsui  
Edmund and Joan McMahon  
Laura & Bill Milak  
Melanie Mundy  
Gina Nielsen  
Claire Pospisil and Kirkham Coornwell, Jr.  
Karen Seminary  
Nancy J. Simpson and Irene Simpson Clark  
Alfred and Nan Smith  
Robert van der Stricht  
Linda VanSchaick  
Hoover Wolff



# Maple Gardens

Herm Finkbeiner

People in every part of the world are fascinated with trees. When European exploration of the world began in earnest in the 14TH Century, among the things that were brought home were trees and shrubs from the newly-explored lands. By the 18TH Century, expeditions were sent out with the specific—and often the sole—objective of collecting new plants for use in the gardens of Europe. Hugh Johnson, best known for his reputation as a wine connoisseur; has published at least 40 books on wine and wine history. He also published one book on trees, *The International Book of Trees*, in 1973. The book is best summarized by the comment, “You can walk past seventy feet of the greatest beauty every morning for years without noticing it. I did. Or you can open your eyes and begin to follow the pattern of the branches, and discover the causes and origins, and find an infinity of sensuous detail to enjoy, in every tree in every street.”

Genus *Acer*, the maples, are one genera that attracts the attention of not just specialists but of the public at large. (*Acer* is derived from the Greek word meaning “sharp” and is the Latin name for maple.) It became the formal name for maple when Carl Linnaeus published *Species Planarum* in 1753. He was following the lead of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, the French botanist who assigned the name. Other woody plants with extensive literature come by their fame because of their blossoms. No one would write about roses and rhododendrons because of their bark, form, magnificent size or shape, leaf colors or foliage shapes.

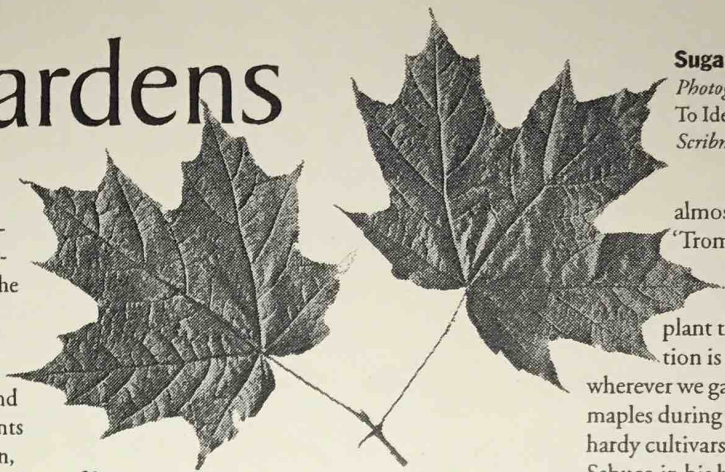
With the variety of available specimens it should be possible to design an entire garden based on maples with perennials and understory plants to provide a counterpoint. The variation of every tree in such a garden would provide true year-round interest.

## Leaf shape

As a genus, *Acer* is rather undisciplined. The leaves range from oval to hand-shaped to so finely-filigreed that little appears to be left other than the principal leaf veins.

## Color

Spring, summer and fall colors are equally diverse. There are maples that begin their seasons with almost white leaves to those with a green so deep as to be almost black. There is every shade of red and yellow. The summer colors are equally reckless—light green, yellow, two-tone and all the hues and mixtures of reds and yellows. With autumn comes some measure of consistency; almost all species tend toward some shade of red-orange and yellow, frequently in wild assortments. There are mavericks, though, that turn brown and drop their leaves, caring little for the family reputation.



## Size

Size is no more consistent than leaf shape and color. There are maples that are hardly more than woody shrubs and there are forest giants of more than 150 feet.

## Seeds

It is only when we come to the seeds that a true commonality asserts itself. All maples have two winged seed bodies, maple keys, two seeds joined at the base and each with a wing. This combination is unique enough to warrant a special name: samara. Maple and ash are two local examples. Even here they can't bring themselves to fully agree. Some seed and wing combinations are two- to three-inches long and others are three sixteenths of an inch long.

The size of the tree is not an indication of the size of seed. Large trees can have small seeds and small trees may have some of the largest seeds. However, the keys are a reliable method of identifying the maple species.

The richness of shapes, colors and sizes has meant that maples fit in every garden from the smallest container display to the multi-acre estate. They can be magnificent, towering trees that dominate their environment to miniatures that are well-suited to the rock garden. They withstand root pruning that makes them favorites for bonsai but also allows them to be controlled in the small garden.

## Bark

Similar variation in bark is available in Asiatic maples as well as North American species. There are maples with bark as smooth as that of beech to the roughness of *A. palmatum* 'Pine Bark Maple'. The bark is even available in green or richly-striped with white, the “snake bark” maples.

## Flowers

Although maple flowers are not usually considered a primary attraction, even here there are interesting and beautiful examples. The maroon and white blossoms of *A. japonicum* 'Aconitifolium' would catch the eye of anyone, and *A. cappadocicum*, *A. diabolicum* and *A. rubrum* 'Red King' are grown, at least to some extent, because of their striking flowers.

For the average-size garden, the focus invariably turns to the oriental maples where the range and color of the foliage is extraordinary: the new leaves of *A. palmatum* 'Tsuma-gaki' are pendular, soft yellow; those of *A. palmatum* 'Ever Red' are silvery; *A. palmatum* 'Karasugawa' is

## Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum*.

Photograph from *Our Native Trees and How to Identify Them*, by Harriet L. Keeler, Scribners, NY, 1900

almost white; *A. palmatum* 'Trompenburg' has purple-red foliage.

For those of us living in the “inhospitable” Northeast, the plant that immediately attracts our attention is hardy at least one zone south of

wherever we garden. The intense interest in maples during the past 50 years, has meant that hardy cultivars are increasingly available. John Sabuco in his book *The Best of the Hardest*, lists five pages of maples hardy from Zone 5 to Zone 2. To quote him on the trident maple, *Acer buergerianum* (frequently listed as Zone 6 or even Zone 7), “I have planted this lovely tree in places the devil himself wouldn't like.” Since his book was compiled in 1985 there undoubtedly have been many other hardy selections identified and it requires only some diligence in finding the sources and patience in replacing your failed choices.

To see the maples in their splendor there are collections that make them the featured exhibit. The Esvelt Arboretum in the Netherlands has one of the largest collection of maples in the world with more than 670 kinds. One of the most remarkable things about Esvelt is its age. It was started in 1970, illustrating the dedication that was part of making it the premier collection in the world in only 30 years. In England, arboreta with large collections are Wakehurst Place Garden, Westonbirt Arboretum, Windsor Great Park, Winkworth Arboretum and Wisley Garden.

Returning to Hugh Johnson and *The International Book of Tree*, it is clear that he feels that every genus has special attractions. But his most eloquent expression is reserved for the maples.

“The oaks, the hollies, the mountain ashes and the southern beeches get through to the semi-finals. But in the finals there is no competition. The maples are the trees with the most beautiful and varied foliage of all the broadleaves.”

Johnson is so taken with maples that he gives them equal space (eight pages) with the oaks, even though there are four times as many oak species (600) as there are maples (150). Those numbers reverse when cultivars are considered. *Maples of the World* lists more than 1,500 recognized maples, i.e., maples with published descriptions.

Johnson says, “There is no describing nor satisfactorily photographing the trumpet pitch of reds their leaves achieve. And strangely you never seem to see two trees with the same tone side by side, the whole gamut of the highest frequency colours is in use.”

The University of Alabama, Huntsville website [www.uah.edu/admin/Fac/grounds](http://www.uah.edu/admin/Fac/grounds) has a significant number of maples as part of the database. Data sheets include size, foliage, flower fruit/seed, bark, pests and diseases, landscape use and performance as well as photographs of outstanding features, e.g. fall color, bark, profile.



# SPECIAL EVENTS & Classes

**TO REGISTER FOR SPECIAL EVENTS AND CLASSES, PLEASE USE THE FORM ON PAGE 11.**

Continued from page 2

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“In Olivia’s Garden,” Landis’ drawing and painting class, conducted by botanical artist, Anne Jaster will be held at the Skory’s garden. See description below.)

**Viktorija Serafin** has an artist’s eye for the beautiful and unique—and that is what you will find in her collector’s garden. She is a self-proclaimed plant-aholic. Her garden includes such rarities as white-berried mountain ash, a climbing monkshood, and a pine with yellow variegation that gives it the name “Dragon’s Eye”. Some of the more unusual cultivars include the burgundy leaf “diablo” ninebark, and variegated “Wolf Eyes” dogwood. She also has 250 varieties of daylilies, including some spider varieties and spectacular no longer available old timers. The 100 different conifers create structure to the garden and shelter to over 550 varieties of hostas. After graduating from SUNY Cobleskill with a BT in plant science, Viktorija began her own hosta nursery, and is president of the Upstate New York Hosta Society. Sunday, July 28, 10–4pm, Fultonville. Tickets are available at \$10 for each garden or \$30 for all four. Each tour participant will receive tickets printed with directions to the garden of the day and information about other things to do in the area. Call the office for a brochure or send your check or credit card information with name, address, phone and note which gardens you want to visit. Funds raised from the Garden Tour support the Arboretum’s programs and collections.

## “In Olivia’s Garden”

**May 14, 21, 18, June 4, 11, 4–7 pm (Tuesdays)**

Jointly sponsored by Landis and the Environmental Clearing House, Anne Jaster will lead drawing and painting workshops in the gardens of Olivia Skory. Participants should bring a sketch pad and pencil to the first class. Class size is limited. Registration deadline is Wednesday, May 8. \$45 members/\$55 non-members Four Saturdays, July 20, 12–5 pm

## Children’s Workshop

**June 1, 9am–12pm (Saturday)**

Holly Hall will combine arts and plants through leaf casting in plaster of Paris and leaf printing with textile paint on t-shirts. The workshop is open to children of all ages. Children under 8 years of age must be accompanied by an adult, but all parents are welcome to join the activities. Children should bring a pre-washed, plain t-shirt. All other materials will be provided by the Arboretum. \$5 members/\$7 non-members

## Bus Trip & Tour of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens

**Wednesday, June 12, 6am–7pm**

The tour group will leave the Wade Tours bus terminal on Burdeck Street in Rotterdam at 6:30 am. There will be one rest stop along the NYS Thruway. We will arrive at the Garden around 11 am. A docent-led 1½ hour “Season Highlights” tour for the group will include the Cranford Rose Garden and the newly-restored Japanese Hill and Pond Garden. After the tour we are free to explore the rest of this 52-acre educational facility. Lunch is available at the Terrace Cafe (picnicking is not permitted). The bus will depart from The Brooklyn Botanic Gardens at 3pm and arrive in Rotterdam around 7pm. There will be one rest stop along the NYS Thruway. Registration and prepayment deadline is Tuesday, June 4. \$55 members/\$60 non-members.

## Photography Workshop

**May 25, 9–12pm (Saturday)**

Join Frank Knight for instruction on photographing plants and landscapes. \$10 members/\$12 non-members.

## Big Tree Trip

**June 7, 9am–2pm (Friday)**

Fred Breglia, arborist and avid tree hunter has discovered many state champion trees in Schoharie and neighboring counties. Join Fred on a tour to see some of New York State’s biggest trees, many of which are on private lands and are not open to the public. Registration required by Wednesday, June 5. \$40 members/\$45 non-members.

## Finding Our Ancient Forests

**June 22, 9am–3pm (Saturday)**

Join Fred Breglia, leader of the eastern New York old-growth forest survey team, Bob Leverett, national old-growth forest expert, Bruce Kershner, old-growth forest ecologist, and other experts. They recognized and verified our senior citizen forests and will explain the methods and techniques of measuring and age-dating trees. Enjoy a full day of workshops in old-growth survey skills, including field work and a slide show of New York State old-growth stands. Bring lunch. \$20 members/\$25 non-members/\$10 youth under 18.

## Basic Pruning Workshop

**July 6, 9am–noon (Saturday)**

This is a hands-on workshop with Fred Breglia. Participants should bring their own pruning tools and gloves. Some equipment will be available. Fred will guide work in the Arboretum’s collections and talk about the wheres and whys of pruning. Quality pruning implements will be available for sale in the Acorn Shop. Class size is limited. Registration and payment deadline is Wednesday, July 3. \$20 members/\$25 non-members

## Advanced Pruning Workshop

**July 20, 9am–noon (Saturday)**

Fred Breglia will lead this hands-on workshop in the collections of the Arboretum. Participants should bring their own pruning tools and gloves. Some equipment will be available. Fred will give in-depth instruction during the workshop. Class size is limited. Registration and payment deadline is Wednesday, July 17. \$20 members/\$25 non-members.

## Watercolor Sketches

**July 20, 9:30am–4pm (Saturday)**

Join Betsy Apgar-Smith, regionally acclaimed artist and teacher of techniques of watercolor for all skill levels. Cost of supplies are separate. \$20 members/\$25 non-members.

## Perennial Garden Design and Plant Propagation

**August 3, 9am–noon (Saturday)**

This is a hands-on workshop in the Van Loveland perennial garden at the Arboretum—the second of what we hope will be an annual event. Participants will dig and divide with the professional guidance of Fred Breglia, staff horticulturist at the Arboretum and Ken Carnes, Cornell Cooperative Extension agent. Participants will learn techniques of propagation and how to design perennial gardens with year round interest. Participants should bring their own digging tools and gloves and dress appropriately. Class size is limited. Registration and payment deadline is Wednesday, August 14. \$30 members/\$35 non-members May 25, 9–12 pm.

## Tick and Lyme Disease

**May 11, 10 am (Saturday)**

**NEW!** Dave Williams will speak about tick and lyme disease. Call the Arboretum, 875-6935 for further details.

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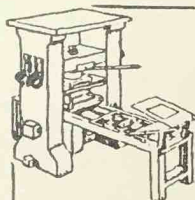
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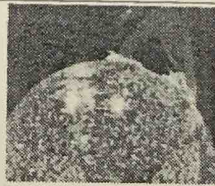


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## CALENDAR Upcoming Events

For registration and information call 518-875-6935 or [landis@midtel.net](mailto:landis@midtel.net); or use the registration form on page 11.

Enclose with payment and mail to: Landis Arboretum, Lape Road, Box 186, Esperance, NY 12066-0186

### May 11 (Saturday) 6-9am

All events take place at the Arboretum unless noted.

Concerts and performances are presented in the Meeting House. Advance registration is requested. Free for children under 12.

Pre-payment and registration is required for all general classes and workshops, trips and Horticulture Certificate classes. Call the Arboretum for workshop fees.

NEW! For your convenience, payment can be made via Visa or MasterCard.

Family workshops with nature educator George Steele begin at the Arboretum Meeting House. Programs are free and no registration is necessary. Donations are greatly appreciated. Programs are held rain or shine.

For a more complete description of course contents, see the "Coming Attractions" insert in the Winter 2002 Newsletter or related articles in this issue.

### May 11, (Saturday) 6-9am

FAMILY PROGRAM:

Bird Walking

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### May 11, (Saturday) 10 am

**NEW!** Tick and Lyme Disease talk  
Speaker: Dave Williams

### May 14, 21, 18, June 4, 11

(Tuesdays) 4-7pm

GENERAL CLASS:

"In Olivia's Garden"

Instructor: Anne Jaster

Registration and payment required by Wednesday, May 8. Registration is limited. \$30 members/\$35 non-members.

### May 17 (Friday) 5-8pm

PLANT SALE

Preview Party

\$10 Members. \$45 for new members.

(includes price of buffet supper.)

Registration and payment by May 13.

### May 17 (Friday) 7:30-9pm

FAMILY PROGRAM

Sounds of Spring Night Walk

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### May 18-19 (Saturday-Sunday)

10am-4pm

PLANT SALE

Spring Plant Sale

Free. Free parking.

### May 25 (Saturday) 9-2pm

ARTS & PLANTS

Photography Workshop

Instructor: Frank Knight

\$10 members/\$12 non-members.

### June 1 (Saturday) 9am-12pm

ARTS & PLANTS

Children's Workshop

Instructor: Holly Hall

Open to children of all ages. Children

under 8 must be accompanied by an

adult. \$5 members/\$7 non-members.

### June 1 (Saturday) 8-9:30pm

FAMILY PROGRAM

Moth Watch

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### June 7 (Friday) 9am-2pm

GENERAL CLASS

Big Tree Trip

Instructor: Fred Breglia

Registration required by June 5.

\$40 members/\$45 non-members.

### June 7 (Friday) 10:00 pm

ASTRONOMERS: STAR PARTY

### June 12 (Wednesday) 6am-7pm

BUS TRIP AND TOUR

Brooklyn Botanic Gardens

Registration and payment is June 4.

\$55 members/\$60 non-members.

### June 16 (Sunday) 2-3:00pm

FAMILY PROGRAM

Father's Day Pond Exploration

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### June 22 (Saturday) Noon-2pm

ASTRONOMERS STAR PARTY

Solar Observing.

### June 22 (Saturday) 9-3pm

GENERAL CLASS

Finding our ancient forests

Instructor: Fred Breglia

Bring lunch; Registration by June xxx;

\$20 members/\$25 non-members/

\$10 youth under 18.

### July 6 (Saturday) 9am-noon

GENERAL CLASS

Basic Pruning Workshop

Instructor: Fred Breglia

Registration and payment by July 3.

\$20 members/\$25 non-members.

### July 12 (Friday) 8:30-10pm

FAMILY PROGRAM

Bats

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### July 12 (Friday) 10:00pm

ASTRONOMERS STAR PARTY

### July 13 (Saturday) 7-10pm

CONCERT

Jazz and Blues with Sam Whedon and Friends

\$5 members/\$7 non-members.

### July 20 (Saturday) 9:30am-4pm

ARTS AND PLANTS

Watercolor Sketches

Instructor: Betsy Apgar-Smith

\$20 members/\$25 non-members.

Separate fee for art supplies.

### July 20 (Saturday) 9am-noon

GENERAL CLASS

Advanced Pruning Workshop

Instructor: Fred Breglia

Registration and payment by July 17.

\$20 members/\$25 non-members

### July 28 (Sunday) 2-3:30pm

FAMILY PROGRAM

Herpetology Hike

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.

### August 2 (Friday) 9:30 pm

ASTRONOMERS STAR PARTY

### August 3 (Saturday) 7pm

CONCERT

Classical Music and Flamenco Guitar

Maria Aemantauski

\$10 members/\$12 non-members.

### August 3 (Saturday) 9am-noon

GENERAL CLASS

Perennial Garden Design & Plant

Propagation Workshop

Instructors: Fred Breglia & Ken Carnes

Registration & payment by August 14

\$30 members/\$35 non-members.

### August 10 (Saturday) 2-3:30pm

Family Program

Animal Homes

Instructor: George Steele

Free; no registration required.