



Heather Notes

Volume 1

Number 3

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Heather Society

In Brief

220 members paid up

Suggest a future meeting site

Recruit new members

Contribute to your newsletter

Fall Meeting Moves to Sylvan Nursery

by Kate Herrick

The NEHS Fall Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 26, 1991 at the Sylvan Nursery, 1028 Horseneck Rd., Westport, MA. The meeting is to begin at 10:30 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m.

The general membership meeting will be held promptly at 10:30 in the heather area. Following the business session, Andy Wheeler will give a brief talk on the history of Sylvan and a demonstration on their method of propagation. Members will be encouraged to participate and share their successful propagation techniques.

Lunch is planned for 1:00 p.m. and each person attending the meeting should provide his or her own food. Hot coffee and tea will be supplied by NEHS.

At 1:30 we will be taken on a tour of the nursery. It is extensive and one of the largest operations in

the northeast. There are potted and field grown beds of heathers, trees, shrubs and groundcovers. Following the tour, you may select plants for purchase. The inventory is computerized so will be important to wait until a salesperson can assist you before any plants are pulled from the blocks. All transactions must be completed by 4:00 when the office closes.

To reach Sylvan Nursery from the south, take Rt. 195 east to Rt. 88, exit 10, Horseneck Beach. From Boston and points west, take Rt. 24 south to Fall River to Rt. 195 east (sign: exit 41E New Bedford) a short distance to Rt. 88, exit 10, Horseneck Beach. At the fourth traffic light on Rt. 88 (Hixbridge Rd.) turn left. Continue straight at the stop sign following yellow arrows. At the Citgo gas station, turn right onto Horseneck Rd. and go exactly 4 miles to the nursery which is on the left.

Inside

History.....	pg. 3
Planning Pointers.....	pg. 4
Weather or Not.....	pg. 5
Garden Reporter.....	pg. 7

From Your Editor

In my last editorial, I posed the question "Do our plants actually benefit from all the attention they receive?" The answer can only be a resounding "yes" for they do, indeed, grow better when properly planted, watered and pruned. Getting attention from the grower in the form of regular inspections keeps the plants looking their best.

It was always my practice to stroll through my heather beds early in the morning; it was a good way to start the day. Every weekend in spring and then everyday once school let out, I made the circuit. But I did not make my regular weekend trips to Cape Cod last spring and only began feeling well enough to take a renewed interest in my plants in mid-July so, they suffered. As Kate mentioned elsewhere, the June and July weather there was awful (very hot and no rain at all) and as a result I lost about eight plants. I suffered pangs of guilt in not being able to save some of my favorites.

The flowering of the summer bloomers was discouraging and I was reluctant to replace the dead plants with the weather being so uncooperative. Also, I prefer to plant in the spring. Fall has just begun and already the spring garden chores are starting to pile up!

I had an interesting letter from a fellow heather gardener in Scotland. Apparently Walter Wornick left several copies of our Heather Notes at Cherrybank Gardens, Perth and a John Proudfoot has offered to trade cuttings with me. He has everything I listed in "The Cutting Exchange" and more besides. I can't wait until I finish with this issue so that I can have some time to write to him. I haven't even found the time to cull new "wants" from the latest Underhill book. I have done a small amount of arm twisting and Kate and Betsy have promised to root cuttings for me in exchange for a share of the Scottish bounty.

Most of you out there are not contributing to our publication. Consider writing something for it an obligation you must fulfill.

From Your President

At the annual meeting about 30 or so members met, a mix of both new and familiar faces. Art Dome and I arrived early to set up plants for the plant sale. I am glad he hitched a ride with me from the Ramada Inn as he was very helpful in the organization of it all. He has had a lot more experience with that kind of thing than I. Having the 100+ plants on display was a great way to show heathers to neophytes. Following lunch, we were shown slides of the grounds as they look in the spring by Dr. John Glasser- flowering fruit trees, bulbs and Dr. Glasser's passion- the many wild flowers and ferns which bring plant enthusiasts to the garden at that time of year. Next, Dr. Glasser led us on a guided tour. He is one of the volunteers who is dedicated to the upkeep and educational goings on at this marvelous old estate. That Clarence Mackenzie Lewis, who built the estate, also had a passion for plants was evident as we traveled throughout the grounds. Somewhat disappointing were the heather gardens and there were three of different ages. I thought of it as an educational experience to show how heather grows in a wet area (cattails and bog plants were encroaching), what plants look like when not pruned (scraggly and top heavy) and how important mulching is (weeds were out of control and there was definite drying out of plants). The soil was heavy and any attempt to make it suitable for the growing of heather had fallen short. The oldest garden, planted on the edge of evergreens was predominately Ericas which can tolerate a bit more shade and moisture. Perhaps the build-up of years of decaying evergreen needles at the woodland's border had improved the drainage and ph.

Many of us recognized the reasons why the garden looked like it did and we shared that knowledge with our new members as well as remedies for its improvement. The volunteers who maintain the garden need help! Anyone living nearby who can offer assistance should do so. We all have an obligation to keep heather plantings which are open to the public in good shape.

Heather Notes

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A Little Bit of Horticultural History

by Judy Anmahian

Imagine these faces as you work in your garden, your fingers in the soil and your mind drifting like the air. Imagine, and remember their names:

Vivienne, who gentled foxes, badgers and a weasel

Esther, who danced with delight on the wild Cornish moor

Robert, little hard-working lad, pushing a barrow at Birmingham flower market

Charlie, who came to England with the Anzacs in World War I and stayed, but never lost his love for Australian plum jam

And Ethel, out with her dog and her walking stick on the Great Heath of Dorset

These are the spirits who live in the heather garden: these are but a few of the people for whom cultivars were named.

All right, I can get a little airy-fairy contemplating the past, but I think we're lucky to be associated with plants whose cultivated history is really quite recent and whose varieties are so rich with people, living or within living memory.

The practice of naming heath and heather cultivars for people started, I gather, with the Yorkshire firm of Backhouse which in 1911 came out with a coronation series of *Erica carnea*: "King George" (V), 'Queen Mary' (formerly Princess Victoria Mary of Teck,

THE Queen Mary), 'Prince of Wales' (ill-fated Edward VIII, later Duke of Windsor) and 'Queen of Spain' (Princess Victoria Eugenie, wife of Alphonse XIII and granddaughter of Queen Victoria).

That practice caught on and, at the same time, heathers really caught on in Great Britain. The 1920's were the peak of the pioneering period, with scores of named varieties brought out by the famous Maxwell & Beale nursery in Dorset ... about whom much more later.

Place names also crop up frequently, as in the case of the old (founded in 1827) and venerable firm of James Smith & Sons of Darley Dale, Derbyshire, who gave us *Calluna v. 'Darleyensis'*, *E. tetralix 'Darleyensis'* (1936), *E. x darleyensis 'Darley Dale'* and *E. x darleyensis 'James Smith'* for the firm's founder.

Likewise the Underwoods (variously referred to as Underwood Brothers and G. Underwood & Son) had a nursery at Hookstone Green, near Woking, Surrey, and constantly everything named Hookstone or Underwood came from them. The charming story of the firm's founder, George E. Underwood, coming across a fine *calluna* survives. Out for a walk on Cobham Ridges one day in 1936, George was caught in a storm and took shelter. His attention was drawn to "a white ring" on a hillside some distance away, and despite the pelting English rain, he went out to discover *C. v. 'Underwoodii'*. Never

mind that he saw a white ring and 'Underwoodii' is pale lavender- the blossoms don't open and that may explain it.

The Underwoods are famous for *E. tetralix*, and hunting for new cultivars was a family affair. *E. tetralix 'Con Underwood'* is named for Constance, George's wife; 'Ken Underwood' for their son; 'Daphne Underwood' for Ken's wife; and 'L. E. Underwood' for George's father. George himself is remembered with an *E. vagans 'George Underwood'*. An *E. cinerea 'Ann Berry'* is named for a member of their nursery staff, although sources can not agree if that cultivar was found by Ann herself or by her husband, a retired policeman, while walking across Cobham Common, eyes peeled to the ground.

If there's one thing I've come to detest while researching this article, it is the British penchant for referring to people by their initials and surname only. It is such a chore to drag out a good old American first name/British Christian name. Fortunately, though, some cultivars are already on a familiar first name basis only.

A fine *calluna* was named for Miss Isobel Young, who found her famous seedling on the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh in 1934, and 'Tib', the Scottish nickname for Isobel, lives on in hundreds of gardens today. I caution against ascribing attributes (is there

continued on pg. 5, col. 1

Planning a Heather Garden

by Joyce Descloux

Shirley Redington is designing a heather bed using all *Calluna vulgaris* cultivars for the Berkshire Botanic Garden in Stockbridge, MA which she hopes to plant next spring. She asked my advice on several planning matters and I am sharing them with you since I think you might find them useful too.

When planning, it is a good idea to begin on paper. I recommend using graph paper so that you can have a definite grid on which to work out your planting plans. Indicate exposure (N-E-S-W), any slopes and portions of the bed shaded in summer.

Space plants 16-18" apart in diagonal rows about three deep, thusly:

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X X X X X X X
X X X X X X X X
X X           X X X
                X X X
                    X X X
    
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This way you can easily plan and plant a curved bed. The cultivars should be in clumps of three or drifts of five or more, as per Gertrude Jekyll, so as to look more natural.

You should plan the bed for:

1. Continuous color from May through October.
2. Height from back to low in front.
3. Harmonious color throughout of both flower and foliage.
4. Cultivars that excel in the harsh northeast climate, so as to inspire viewers to grow heathers themselves.

Obviously, the task is not simple. Take time to design it well and allow for changes in the plan, substituting second or backup choices for those cultivars you might not be able to get or which do not perform well. For

instance, 'Gold Haze' and 'Beoley Gold' are so similar you really don't need both and one could substitute for the other.

I suggest you make separate lists of what cultivars to highlight for each month the garden will be open.

For May, in addition to gold, green and gray foliage, you can feature callunas with colored tips to the new growth such as 'Kerstin', (my favorite), 'Pink Tips', 'Fred J. Chapple', 'Spring Torch', 'Spring Cream' and 'Mrs. Pat'. Rank these according to merit: 'Kerstin'- pink tips, gray foliage, lavender flowers, good bloomer (August), upright growth. You could feature this cultivar for multiple reasons and use it either in a back or middle row.

'Fred J. Chapple'- strong grower, medium height and spread, reddish lavender flowers. This one might be your second choice.

The others on the list all have pink tips in spring, lavender flowers and medium green foliage except 'Spring Cream' which has yellow tips. They all grow upright except 'Mrs. Pat', which is a low spreader, a characteristic that might make it particularly useful. Some find this cultivar difficult but I have had it a long time and it also survived many years at Buck Gardens in heavy clay soil with full exposure to winter sun.

Calluna bloom begins in June with 'Caerketton White', always the first, followed closely by 'Tenuis', a compact dwarf red-lavender which has an extremely long season of bloom. It puts out flowers all summer with another strong flush of bloom in September. I would never be without it.

These are followed closely by 'Prizewinner',

a vigorous upright spreader with heavy foliage much like that of 'Rigida', a good white. Both bloom throughout July. Other good bloomers for that month are 'Rosea', 'Alportii', a favorite red, 'Allegro', which is much like it and 'White (or Silver) Knight' which no heather garden in the Northeast should be without.

The white-flowered, gray-foliaged 'Anthony Davis' is useful for providing a background for the white-flowering doubles such as 'Kinlochruel' and 'My Dream'. They begin to bloom in late July or early August and continue two months or more as long as they receive adequate moisture. I would concentrate on the doubles for their outstanding garden display. 'County Wicklow' and 'Kinlochruel' are good compact growers while the Beale family is more spreading. 'J. H. Hamilton' with its unique rose-pink florets and a low spreading habit should find a place at the front of the bed.

'Peter Sparkes' is considered by many to be an improvement on 'H. E. Beale' with larger, pinker flowers and a better constitution. Other excellent doubles are 'Radnor', 'Elsie Purnell', 'Joan Sparkes', 'Jimmy Dyce' and 'Applecross'. And don't forget 'Tib', an old favorite with lavender flowers and a vigorous habit. These all flower well into September.

Still more cultivars to include are:

'Rosalind' (Underwoods) with feathery, yellow-green foliage and masses of pink flowers. It is a veritable bouquet in bloom which lasts a long time and looks lovely next to 'White/Silver Knight'.

continued on pg. 5, col.1

Planning

continued from pg. 4 col. 3

'David Eason' is a low, spreading bud bloomer. Though the red-lavender florets never open, it is excellent for bright color which extends into late August and September.

'Juno' is another low spreader, but with copious lavender flowers. It is said to be a seedling of 'Sister Anne' and 'Mrs. R. H. Gray'. It is, however, much more vigorous than either of them and a better choice where summers are hot and muggy.

By September the peak of heather bloom has past, but this is when a few cultivars come into glorious full bloom. 'E. F. Brown' is foremost among these with masses of lustrous pale green foliage almost smothered in long sprays of pink flowers and outstanding into October. 'Branchy Anne' is another late bloomer with heavy beads of lavender flowers which is very floriferous. The last to bloom (with me) is 'Finale' which starts up near the end of the month and goes on until frost. These late bloomers are excellent for gardens that will be on view in the autumn.

Heathers hold their own fall festival. The foliage of 'Robert Chapman', 'Blazeaway' and other gold foliaged varieties begins turning red with the first cool nights in September and is really flashy by October. In addition to these, I particularly like the upright 'Sir John Charrington', the low spreading 'John F. Letts' and the new bushy 'Hoyer Hagen'.

The gray and green foliaged cultivars also

undergo seasonal changes as the weather cools. These are better displayed if the spent blossoms are pruned at this time. Golds to grow just for foliage (since they bloom sparsely, if at all) are 'Citronella', 'Guinea Gold' and 'Golden Feather'. Remember that the orientation of the plant towards the sun will determine the change in foliage colors. Shaded plants will not develop flame colors to their full potential.

With so many excellent cultivars to select from in designing the heather bed, the hardest part is perhaps the choosing itself. Larger numbers of fewer cultivars will make a better display than few plants of many varieties. So start with just ten or twelve cultivars, perhaps three each of large growers, five each of medium growers and seven or nine each of small compact growers that will be used in the foreground.

For the Berkshire Garden and most areas in the Northeast, I would use well-established plants in 5" pots to be set out as early as possible in the spring, probably mid-April there. To make the planting succeed as the plan, you will need to know the approximate growth rates of your plants as they grow in your specific microclimate. This may be more or less than the heights and widths given in reference books or nursery catalogs.

Possibly the most important aspect of a public garden is that it be an excellent learning experience as much, if not more, for those who make and tend it than for those who come to view it. So go to it undaunted, knowing that mistakes can be rectified, or at the least, blamed on the weather, critters or somebody else. Gardens, like people, are never perfect!

More History

continued from pg. 3, col. 3

such a word as hortipomorphic?) of the plant to the person, but I like to think Isobel was a tall woman of good posture.

On that note, let there never again be a C. v. 'hirsuta compacta', but let us remember Miss Anne Moseley, a nurse who found her famous calluna in Cornwall in 1929. The British address a nurse as Sister, regardless of religious affiliation of the hospital, and Miss Moseley's own sister called her "Sister Anne."

C. v. 'Alba Jae' is named for Mrs. Fred Chapple, Jae being the nickname for Jessie and Fred being the author and first president of The Heather Society of the U. K. E. carneia 'Jennifer Anne' is for the wife of Geoffrey Yates, nurseryman and author of Nottingham, and E. x watsonii 'Cherry Turpin' for the wife of The Heather Society chairman Maj.-Gen. P. G. Turpin.

And it is fitting that one of the calluna superstars, C. v. 'Sir John Charrington' was presented to the gentlemen himself on the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1966 as a mark of respect and recognition of his work in founding The Heather Society of the U. K. Sir John is dead now, but is there any more strong and touching immortality than his namesake live in gardens all around the world wherever people love heather?

Next:: A young bride dancing on the moor gives her name to the most beautiful of heaths.

How Cape Cod Heathers Weathered the Summer

by Kate Herrick

Last issue I mentioned the mild winter and perfect spring weather we had experienced on Cape Cod. Well, "perfect" ended suddenly as the rains stopped and cloudless blue skies gave us sweltering hot weeks in June and July.

The established heather (plants that had been in the ground two or more years) showed little stress from the heat and lack of water. The flowering was minimal on some plants because flower buds simply dehydrated from the drought and seemed to stop growing. I held off watering a bit too long and some plants that were put in in the fall of 1990 on the top of a slope dried out beyond recovery. When digging them out, it was obvious to me that they had not grown a heavy enough root system deep enough into the surrounding soil to find the moisture needed to sustain them through the drought. The sandy soil was as dry as a desert. If I had prepared the soil better by adding more peat and compost, they probably would have made it through.

When the wooly thyme that is planted around and about the heather started drying up, I turned the water on. The overhead sprinklers we use to irrigate the potted plants here at the nursery were moved to cover the heather garden. Three times, about four days apart, I directed the sprinklers to cover the area for three to four hours, always in the mornings.

Water percolated down to the root zone and the dull looking foliage looked fresh and started growing again.

Lack of or too much watering are the two biggest problems in establishing a garden of heather. Here are a few tips to those who are finding it difficult to find a balance:

Prepare the planting hole at least 2 feet in diameter and 18 inches deep. Generous amounts of peat moss should be added and I often incorporate a fertilizer for acid loving plants such as Holly Tone or Electra. This step will encourage new root growth into the prepared soil.

Water the plant before setting it in the hole possibly by putting the pot in a bucket of water. Loosen the roots if they are a solid mass or cut off the bottom 1/2 inch and make slashes down the sides to stimulate new root growth.

Always mulch well from under the foliage to at least 12 inches beyond the spread. If planting on a slope, create a small moat around the plant to retain water long enough to penetrate down to the root zone.

Water the area very well after planting and again in three to four days. Then wait a week and water once again. You want the needed moisture at the root zone, keeping it evenly moist but not soaking wet.

The mulch will help to retain the moisture. Slowly reduce the frequency of watering.

There seems to be some confusion among those new to heather growing concerning watering. We hear them all when asking the few disgruntled customers about their watering practices. No, you should not put your thumb on the end of the hose and spray your plants every evening. The foliage remains wet and the roots dry. Hand watering with a hose and a nozzle like the Dramm Water Breaker and a \$.79 shut off is best. The nozzle that can be adjusted from a fine spray to a jet stream is fine for washing cars and watering lawns not heather. Don't water in the afternoon or evening. Wet foliage invites fungus attacks. Heathers are very forgiving and would rather wait until morning for a soak. Yes, heather is drought resistant when established, not after a week or a month but after two or three years.

Betsy recommends that people plant some wooly thyme with their heather to act as a barometer. Like heather, it is shallow rooted, turns black and dies out when over watered and dries up when it hasn't had enough.

Meeting Held in N. J.

The NEHS Annual Meeting was held in New Jersey on August 10 and 11, 1991. The Saturday session began at 11:00 a. m. at the Skyland Botanic Garden in Ringwood with time to visit and chat over lunch and beverages. Dr. John Glasser, a volunteer at the Garden, presented a slide show which highlighted the spring flowering season and talked about the history and development of the former home of Clarence Mackensie Lewis. Dr. Glasser also led a walking tour of the grounds which included the three heather beds planted there. Following the tour was a plant sale with many plants available for purchase by the members.

In the evening a reception and banquet were held at the Ramada Inn in nearby Ramsey, New Jersey. Walter Wornick did an excellent job arranging for both the food and lodging. Ever careful of NEHS funds, Walter even brought wine from New Hampshire because it was less costly there.

Homer Ferguson from the North Coast Chapter of the NAHS showed slides of the heather garden at both the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden in California and of the gardens of Jim Thompson. The mass plantings of *Erica cinerea* were quite spectacular and the fact that volunteer effort sustained the Garden was most impressive.

Sunday offered an opportunity to tour private gardens located in proximity to Joyce DeCloux's home in Randolph. The Annual Meeting concluded with a final plant sale and cookout at the home of the Turoffs. Again there was plenty of opportunity for heather conversation and mingling before the Annual Meeting concluded.

Heather Gardens Near and Far by Walter Wornick

A few days after our annual meeting, we stopped to visit the Planting Fields Arboretum in Nassau County, N. Y. We were pleased to find that the heather garden was being replanted with fresh stock supplied by Jim Cross of Environmentals. The site seems to be a good one and forms some sort of a bowl. Plants of varied foliage coloration were being blended together and all were mulched well. This appears to have been a project of several summer interns and two were busy at work putting in more plants at the time of our visit. The soil seemed rather heavy and the root balls were not being broken as the plants were being put into the ground, but we will hope for the best.

This is an arboretum that is always worth a visit. The huge expanse of lawns in front of the original manor house is breathtaking. There is a small greenhouse area which is currently being updated. At present, it houses a display of begonias and bromeliads. There is also a dwarf conifer section planted with some heaths. Of special interest is a Synoptic Garden where plants are arranged in alphabetical order, sort of a growing dictionary of plants. The Camellia Houses have recently been restored and are home to a huge collection, some of which were first imported from China.

The Arboretum can be reached by taking Exit 41 North from the Long Island Expressway and following R-106 North to R-25A. Turn left and then take the first right. Follow the signs to the garden. There is an entrance fee during the summer months and on weekends most of the rest of the year. Stop for lunch at the Millerridge Inn just north of Exit 41 as you leave the Expressway. It is a fine colonial setting and a good value.

I have three favorite English gardens. The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew are within easy reach of central London by the underground. Kew has over 300 acres so it is important to know where you are going. If you arrive by train, turn left at that entrance and watch for the tall pagoda. The heather garden is right near it. It is mature, well maintained and there are benches to sit on to allow a person a good view of it.

The Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park are part of the same complex as the Savill Gardens but are a considerable distance from them. The Green Bus Line has buses that go near the area but I found that most drivers don't know where to let passengers off. It is best to travel to this garden by car. If you manage to reach the Savill Gardens, as you face the entrance and car park, walk left and you will eventually come to a lake and a large totem pole. Walk up the hill from the totem pole and you will see rhododendrons on the left and the extensive heather and dwarf conifer planting further up the hill. Though the heather garden is somewhat overgrown, it contains a good selection of plant material and some care is shown in its upkeep.

Sandringham, near King's Lynn in Norfolk, on B1440 near Wolferton. This property is one of the Queen's residences and the house can be visited when royalty are not present. There are island beds containing heather and it is nice to know that the Queen can look out of her window and see our favorite plants in bloom. Heathers and dwarf conifers are also planted along a stream and pond among a series of rock outcroppings. The heathers are not extensive but are very well done and show a good use of the plant material.

If you are planning a trip to England and want to visit gardens there, make sure to get The Good Gardens Guide edited by Graham Rose and Peter King. It gives directions and descriptions of many gardens and also has a rating scale as to the quality of each. The Hertz Guide to Britain's Gardens is a free map and listing that can be obtained from the British Travel Association here.