



# Heather Notes

Volume 1

Number 4

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

## Sylvan Nursery Hosts Fall Meeting

by Kate Herrick

Sylvan Nursery in Westport, MA was the site of our meeting on October 26, 1991. It was a bit nostalgic for some of the 26 members who attended it as this was the site for one of the first gatherings of the Northeast Heather Society after we were recognized as a chapter of NAHS back in 1987.

Andy Wheeler and Jane Cote gave up their usual routine to give us the day. Name tags adorned with a flowering sprig of *C. v. 'Tenuis'* had been made up by them as were baked goodies and sandwiches. Such hospitality! In return, Walter Wornick presented two gifts to Andy on behalf of the NEHS: a wreath of long flowering branches of heather made by Judy Anmahian and Dorothy Metheny's book, *Hardy Heather Species*. These were not only to thank Andy for her work involved in planning the meeting but also for her support of our organization by promoting it to those customers who show an interest in heather.

introduced to our group during Andy's talk about the history of the nursery. He is a very warm, unpretentious man who's passion for heather started many years ago when a pilot friend began bringing him cuttings and heather plants discovered during many European trips. In the early years, Sylvan Nursery grew mostly hardy, drought resistant sea side plants like *Artemisia 'stelleriana'* (hardy dusty miller) and *Arctostaphylos 'uva-ursi'* (bearberry). Hardy heather species and cultivars were a natural addition to the offerings.

Today, the original area is still dedicated to the production of those same plants and some new additions though it is now surrounded by acres and acres of containerized nursery stock. The selection of material is vast and to see it all can take a few hours. One field, enclosed by a stone wall, is planted with hundreds of heather plants. There are neat, orderly rows where the plants will grow for a year

Sylvan's owner, Neil VanSloun, was

*continued on Page 4*

## Inside

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Letters.....          | pg. 3 |
| Berkshire Garden..... | pg. 5 |
| Travelogue.....       | pg. 5 |
| Winter Garden.....    | pg. 6 |
| Garden Reporter.....  | pg. 7 |
| Winter Meeting.....   | pg. 7 |

## From Your Editor

Kate has left me with a brief space to wish all members Happy New Year. I hope to make the winter meeting but Brandy had four puppies Dec. 26. If I can't get a sitter, you'll get to meet them all. I can't leave them "home alone."

## From Your President

The meeting at Sylvan Nursery was an educational one on the fine art of propagation. I have been friendly with Neil, Andy and the rest of the "Sylvan Family" for over ten years and it was there that I was first introduced to heather. I was a bit confused at first and a bit overwhelmed by the varieties they offered but my fascination with these plants kept me wanting to add to my collection of varieties which I have done slowly. I still have many of the original plants and it is from them that I have taken hundreds of thousands of cuttings.

The 1992 winter and spring meeting dates and sites have been confirmed by our V. P., Will Clarke. We thought that the February meeting at Wellesley College should focus on heather garden design. Bring slides or photos of either your gardens or others you have visited for discussion. This will be a good opportunity to get ideas first hand if you are planning a new bed, adding to or rearranging existing ones and it promises to be an interesting workshop.

Speaking of things photographic, Betsy Erickson has found a film company that sells 35 mm color film and offers to develop prints, slides and negatives from the whole roll at a fair price. Seattle Film Works address is P.O. Box 34056, Seattle, WA 98124-1056.

Our spring meeting will be held May 2 at Smith College with our favorite heather expert, Dick Munson, presiding. Winter protection methods will be discussed as well as pruning and general plant care. Plan on bringing some plants for the plant sale and come with a list of what you might need to fill in a bare spot.

Walter Wornick has graciously offered his mountain top home in Alstead, NH as a future meeting site. He does so much work for our group, both in his formal elected position and as a roving goodwill ambassador for the NEHS. We are lucky to have him in our midst. We are still on the lookout for additional meeting locations. Let Will know if you will be willing to host a meeting or if you know of an interesting public garden with meeting facilities in your geographic area.

Shirley Redington is making progress on the development of the heather garden to be planted at the Berkshire Botanic Garden. She is concerned about the alkalinity of the water she will have to use to irrigate although the soil in the beds will be the appropriate 5.5 pH. The general consensus at the Sylvan meeting was not to worry about it. She plans to plant in early spring and there is usually sufficient rainfall. If she needs to irrigate after the initial watering in, experts at Cornell University Extension Service have told her to add a few drops of vinegar to the water to lower the pH. Has anyone out there had a similar problem?

## Heather Notes

Editor

Susan Fischler  
180 Everett Pl.  
Englewood, NJ 07631  
201-567-6431

### Contributors for this Issue

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Will Clarke.....     | 28 Longview Rd.<br>N. Falmouth, MA<br>02556            |
| Kate Herrick.....    | P. O. Box 693<br>Truro, MA<br>02666                    |
| Timothy Hoffman..... | 124 Evans Ave.<br>Piscataway, NJ<br>08854              |
| Alice Knight.....    | 62 Elma-Monte Rd.<br>98541                             |
| Bruce M. Lane.....   | 10 Hayden Lane<br>Bedford, MA<br>01730                 |
| John Proudfoot.....  | 34 Lynedoch Rd.<br>Methven, Perthshire<br>Scotland, UK |
| Walter Wornick.....  | P. O. Box 101<br>Alstead, NH<br>03602                  |

**Heather Notes** is published quarterly. Submit all manuscripts to the editor by the deadlines which are as follows:

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Summer ..... | June 15  |
| Fall .....   | Sept. 15 |
| Winter ..... | Dec. 15  |
| Spring ..... | March 15 |

## Correspondence from Near and Far

I have just joined NAHS and NEHS and have little experience but great interest in growing heathers. It is obvious that *Heather Notes* will be a considerable help.

Since I soon will be moving, all of the heathers have been repotted into one gallon containers which are oversize for the one and two year old plants I purchased this Spring. Considering this winter I wonder if I would do best to bring these containers indoors or somehow try to protect them outdoors? Any suggestions would be welcome.

In Volume 1, Number 2 of *Heather Notes* you mentioned *C. vulgaris* 'Annemarie' which is pictured, as well as described, in the *Wisley Handbook*. I would like to second that variety on the "want" list.

Bruce M. Lane

*By all means, leave the heathers outside. Try to place them in a sheltered area so that they are protected from the drying effects of wind but are still in a position to benefit from rain and snow cover. A protective layer of evergreen boughs, from discarded Christmas tress perhaps, will also help.*

Dear Susan,

Thank you very much indeed for your printout. You have a very good collection, congratulations.

I shall write again shortly with details of what I can offer. This is not a good time to take cuttings. Our winter started in October this year. It's

possible to have some success in the Spring, but carneas are better left until July.

I can give you the silver-leaved forms you request including 'Beoley Silver' which has the best colour of them all but is not the easiest to grow. The true plant has white flowers. I also have three seedlings, as yet unnamed.

As regards doubles... yes 'Ingrid Bouter' is no problem. 'Tib' is a much better plant, of course. I have never seen 'Baby Wicklow' but will enquire in Holland for you. Did you know that the Dutch have named a sport of 'Kinlochruel' ... pale green leaves, otherwise similar, 'White Coral'. I have it.

I have noted that you don't want rooted cuttings. OK, but I may have to send a few with roots, but I'd give you advance warning to have a small quantity of compost on hand.

I have managed to root a few interesting sports myself and will give you details when I write next... soon.

John Proudfoot

*Our "Cutting Exchange" is bearing fruit. Little did I know when I first expressed my want list that I would be getting offers from Scotland! I would love to have rooted cuttings but does anyone know how these will ship? I thought that all foreign plant material must be absolutely clean before being allowed into the USA and I was afraid that removing the rooting medium would damage the fine roots.*

I am a new member of the Northeast Heather Society. I am currently growing six different varieties of *Calluna* and three *Erica* types. Two factors have drawn me to your cutting exchange: limited funds and a passionate interest in landscaping our property with heather!

My interest in your exchange program is to build a collection of exceptional heathers (*callunas* with interesting foliage and/or flowers) and offer them in exchange for those that others consider favorites.

My cuttings are currently rooting under fluorescent lights. I am concentrating on the winter "red-coats": *C. v. 'Blazeaway'* and *C. v. 'Red Haze'*.

I am anxiously awaiting information concerning your program.

Timothy Hoffman

*Please share your favorite cultivars with Tim. Even if you can not offer him any cutting material, I am sure he would be most appreciative of your ideas and thoughts.*

We've enjoyed another fine issue of *Heather Notes*. I think it is great that you are finding so many willing scribes! I particularly enjoyed Judy's fine article on plant name origins. All of the articles were of interest, easy to read and good to have in a file! Even our nursery workers commented on how much they enjoyed Number 3! Hope

*continued on Page 4*

## Fall Meeting at Sylvan at Sylvan Nursery

*continued from Page 1*

or two until they are dug, sold as field-grown or potted into two or three gallon containers. Most of the 100,000 cuttings stuck and rooted annually are grown on in pots with the two quart size being the most popular.

Production at Sylvan starts in December. In a 100 foot greenhouse, a "sand box" approximately 12 feet wide and 80 feet long which sits up off the ground is filled with six inches of packed down and leveled builders sand. Andy and Jane compile a listing of the varieties and quantities to stick and from what plants the cuttings should be taken from. Sources may be from the field or from potted plants overwintering in the many cold frames. This list is very crucial because plants are cut back in the fall and without it, the removed plant material would end up in the compost heap. Red ribbons are also used to flag stock plants.

Andy demonstrated their cutting methods with branches of *C. v. 'Silver Knight'* which were about eight to ten inches long. Three to four inch cuttings were made from each branch and the lower part of it was discarded. This bottom section is often too woody for rooting to take place. The lower one to two inches of each cutting was stripped of foliage, bundled with elastic bands and the bundle was submerged for a few seconds in a fungicide solution to prevent any pathogens from spreading.

In the greenhouse a board is placed on the sand bed to use as a guide for a knife to make a two to three inch deep

row. The cuttings, which have been dipped in a rooting powder, are spaced about one inch apart. When the row is filled, the board is placed next to the cuttings and pounded with mallets to ensure a firm contact between the cuttings and the sand. Another row is cut and the procedure is repeated until the entire bed is full, about 100,000 cuttings later.

Cuttings are watered at the end of the day, followed by hand misting if needed during the day. The air temperature is kept cool but not freezing during the winter months. Warm temperatures would promote foliage growth and faster rooting and then the cuttings would have to be potted up much sooner than Sylvan's traditional June first date to begin transplanting them into 2 1/2 inch pots.

Andy explained that this production schedule and technique is pretty standard in the industry although most growers have customized the procedure to fit their individual needs. The timing sequence is determined by the space needed to put the cuttings and the people to do the work. At Sylvan Nursery, much of the overwintering stock in the cold frames is sold to wholesale and retail customers in the Spring, especially the *Ericas* which are heavy in bloom, thus opening up space for the newly potted heathers and completing the production cycle.

Andy and the rest of the employees at Sylvan feel as though they are part of a big family whose main goal is to share their knowledge and love of the plants that they work with every day.

## Letters

*continued from Page 3*

you can keep arm-twisting to get folks to share!

Glad that Walter made contact with John Proudfoot and that you will be receiving cuttings for some of the cultivars on your wish list! We do need more cuttings here in the U.S. With our collection nearing 400 cultivars, I've not actively sought new ones in recent years. My husband thinks what we have is too many... and I have to agree when it comes time to decide how many cuttings to take of each. We still add as they come our way but glad that others are also interested in getting new names into our country's offerings. David Wilson from B. C. was here a few weeks ago and shared some cuttings of his new hybrids. We are anxious to see how they turn out.

Let's hope that the upcoming winter is kind to all our heathers.

Alice Knight

*Alice also enclosed information on how to order Hardy Heather Species. However, since Walter Wornick coordinates book sales for our chapter, I did not include that information here. See Walter's book information on page 7.*

### Membership Information

Your membership expiration date is clearly shown on your address label on this newsletter. Remember that our dues are based on the calendar year. Dues are still \$5.00 per year and you may pay for more than one year at a time. One of our members, in fact, has paid dues through the year 2000. If your membership has expired, use the enclosed envelope to send your check, made payable to NEHS, if you want to continue your membership in our organization.

## Progress Made on Berkshire Heather Garden

by Shirley Redington

As you may know there is a new heather border planned for the Berkshire Botanical Garden to be sponsored by our organization. It is a lovely setting with a collection of dwarf conifers in the background and I have been in close contact with Joe Strauch, the director, who has been most cooperative and appreciative.

My first step was to test a composite sample of the soil for pH. I then added a measured amount of elemental sulphur according to Cornell recommendations, incorporating that plus peat moss and a copious supply of pine needles. I also widened the existing bed and improved its contour. It is all ready to go come spring.

In a recent issue of *Heather Notes*, you may have read the letter of advice I received from Joyce Descloux. I have tried to follow that advice. Other members have been helpful in recommending cultivars. In fact, at the fall meeting, both Kate Herrick and Andy Wheeler suggested replacing *C. v. 'My Dream'* with *C. v. 'Kinlochruel'*. The former does not grow well in New England and both have the characteristic I wanted, double white flowers. Judy Anmahian has offered to "cook" up a batch of her famous heather compost for me.

The border has been plotted on graph paper. The plan indicates that we will need 103 plants. Sometime in January I will send a round robin letter to several

nursery members of NEHS asking for specific donations of calluna varieties. I think it highly unlikely that those nurseries will be able to donate all the plants. Personally, I feel that they should not be expected to. Therefore, I hope to purchase the remainder and for this I will need money.

According to our treasurer, Walter Wornick, there is a "garden fund" in our treasury. I have already spent some of it though he doesn't know it yet because I am saving receipts in order to keep the number of monetary transactions minimal. I am appealing to the general membership for donations. I promise to keep good records, return what is not needed and keep you up-to-date on the border's progress through *Heather Notes*.

Please send your checks made payable to me, Shirley Redington, and marked "Heather bed at BBG" on the memo line. My address is 1169 Mohawk Road, Schenectady, NY 12309-1607.

Not only will we need to purchase plants, but as soon as we have something to be proud of, we will need to invest in signs and labels. Also, after the planting is well established, we will have to make available a brochure about NEHS and heather culture to the visitors to the BBG headquarters. I can just see it now: Hundreds of visitors will stumble on to our display garden and say "I didn't know you could grow heathers in this climate!" Wish me luck!

## Traveling in England

by Walter Wornick

While attempting to plan a trip to see heather in bloom in England last September, I asked several contacts where it might be best to go. The answer I got "Walter, it's blooming everywhere" really didn't help me in my preparations for making reservations for places to stay. So for those of you who might be thinking of an English trip, I can recommend several places of great interest.

Someone has made the determination that when the heather is in bloom in August and September there are 3,000 million tiny purple blossoms to each square mile. One of the largest areas covered by heather can be found in North York Moors National Park. As far back as the Bronze Age, settlers cut down the prehistoric forests of yew, oak, elm and lime trees. The North York moors are traversed by ancient tracks or trods which were built in the Middle Ages by local monasteries. Stone crosses were set up to guide travelers across these featureless moors and some 30 still stand today. Heather now covers about 40% of the park area. Bracken and birch tree seedlings are crowding out the heather. In the past, grazing cows would step on the bracken and break it off but as even sheep grazing was limited or eliminated, the growth of the bracken and tree seedlings continued to the detriment of the heather. I found the most spectacular views to be at Ravenscar on the cliffs along the coast with the views of Robin's Hood Bay seaward and the purple heather inland.

*continued on Page 6*

# Heathers in the Winter Garden

by Will Clarke

If the view from your window is unappealing at this time of year perhaps you should consider a winter garden. It's a concept that hadn't occurred to me until I attended a workshop on the subject. I had always thought of "winter interest" as desirable, but secondary to the other seasons. Winter is long though, especially in the northeast, so why not have a garden designed to look its best then?

Needless to say, heathers are the ideal carpet for a winter garden room. And it should be a room. Enclosures are good for most gardens and especially so in winter when undesirable views are more of a problem. Even if you have nothing to hide, the structural element of a frame will strengthen the garden and lend some protection to the heathers since covering them is not an option for the winter view. Snow cover, on the other hand, is beyond the gardener's control. If you are blessed with a winterlong blanket of white, your heathers can still brighten the beginning and end of the season but you'll have to depend on taller companions to carry the garden through the middle. Naturally, you'll want to site the garden where it can easily be seen from the house or, at least, from the path between the house and car.

Heathers for the winter garden fall into two main categories: Calluna varieties for foliage color and winter blooming Ericas.

There is, of course, a bewildering

variety of Callunas to choose from but certainly you will want to include at least one of the cultivars such as 'Blazeaway' or 'Robert Chapman', that change from gold to red in winter. These look great next to the gray foliated clones like 'Silver Knight' and 'Silver Queen' that are also essential in the winter garden. Yellow heathers that stay that way in winter ('Beoley Gold', 'Cuprea' and 'Gold Haze') make a subtler, but pleasing contrast with bright green plants like 'Alba Rigida' and 'Mairs Variety'. Unless the garden is at a winter-only home, you will need to consider how your chosen combinations look in bloom as well. Fortunately, many of the colorful foliated heathers are white flowered, making the bi-seasoned design less daunting. ~~I haven't suggested any dark~~ green Callunas, partly because they seem too somber in winter and partly because we can get a similar effect plus the bonus of blossoms from winter blooming heaths.

## Walter's Travels

*continued from Page 5*

Dunwich Heath is a National Trust property in Suffolk that consists of about 214 acres of coastline property. There is a magnificent view of the ocean from the sandy cliffs. Long walks extend through the purple Calluna and Bell heathers and these are set off by yellow blooming gorse. There is a two story Coastguard Building where tea is served on the first floor and there is a lookout area and museum on the second floor with vistas of the moors and sea. This facility borders on the Minsmere Bird Reserve where many types of birds can be observed from specially built blinds.

Upon my return home, I was cleaning up the grass

The winter blooming heaths, Erica carnea and E. x Darleyensis, belong in the foreground, possibly at the top of a low stone wall, where they can be seen at close range. They do, indeed, bloom right through the winter but not in profusion until spring. These plants should be kept well away from the brightest Callunas like 'Blazeaway', so as not to be overshadowed or, worse yet, screamed at. Outstanding varieties include E. c. 'Vivelli' and 'Springwood White' and the darleyensis hybrids 'Furzey' and 'Darley Dale'. There are colored foliated varieties too, such as 'Anne Sparkes', but I haven't grown any yet so I can't make recommendations. Also consider some E. tetralix because you can't ever have too much gray foliage.

So put this winter's "sitting and staring" time to good use. Imagine a different view from the window and be ready when spring comes to plant a winter garden.

and weed filled area in proximity to one of my heather beds and was surprised to find that in six or eight areas heather had seeded itself in among the grass and weeds. Despite the fact that the area had been mowed and contained a number of the many rooted New England Asters, heather had been able to germinate and survive.

I have had plants spring up in my beds from time to time but never at such a distance from the beds and among the weeds and grass. I don't know why this one area was conducive to the germination and growth of heather plants while the areas around other heather beds was not. It is good though to have my own little heath or moor developing, be it only a few square feet, and I will watch it with interest.

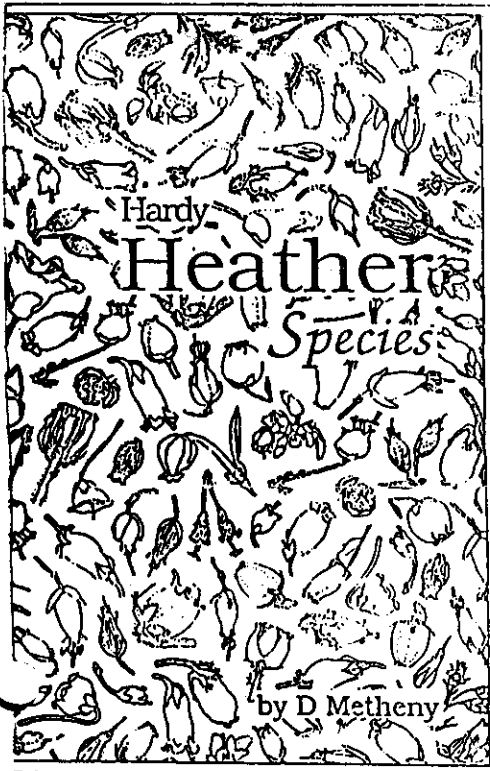
## NEHS Bookstore

The NEHS currently has the following books available for purchase. They may be ordered by your check made payable to NEHS from Walter Wornick, P.O. Box 101, Alstead, NH 03602 or they may be purchased at either the winter or spring meetings.

Dorothy Metheny's *Hardy Heather Species*, 1991, is available for \$15.00. Add \$2.00 if you order this book by mail. This is only the second book on heather which has been published in the United States and its publication was sponsored by the North American Heather Society.

Fred J. Chapple's *The Heather Garden*, 1952, costs \$12.00 with a \$2.00 postal charge.

The Proudly book *Heathers In Colour* costs \$14.00 for the 1974 edition and \$16.00 for the current 1989 one. Include \$2.00 postage for a mail order.



## Cutting Time Is Here

by Kate Herrick

The late fall and winter months is the time to take cuttings for many of us. Whether just a couple dozen or a few thousand cuttings are taken, the methods are similar. A sheltered spot where a pot of sand or other rooting media can be placed and left undisturbed until spring is all that is needed. Once cuttings are stuck and firmed in, a covering of evergreen boughs, burlap or anything else that will keep the sun and wind from desiccating the cuttings is all that is needed. The propagation bed I originally used for winter cuttings was an unheated cold frame which would freeze up in cold weather. The cuttings would just sit there until the warmer days of spring would promote rooting. Having a heated greenhouse is now a luxury. Gone are the days of kneeling on cold wet sand trying to handle hundreds of cuttings with gloves on. The temperature in the greenhouse is set at 50 degrees and we stand in front of a bench sticking cuttings in a flat of media. The cuttings are left to slowly root until June potting time.

Many society members try their hand at rooting cuttings with great success. Learning by doing is the best way. If you have tried before and failed, try again! If you find that propagation is a snap, then bring some plants to the plant sale at the spring meeting.

## Winter Meeting Planned

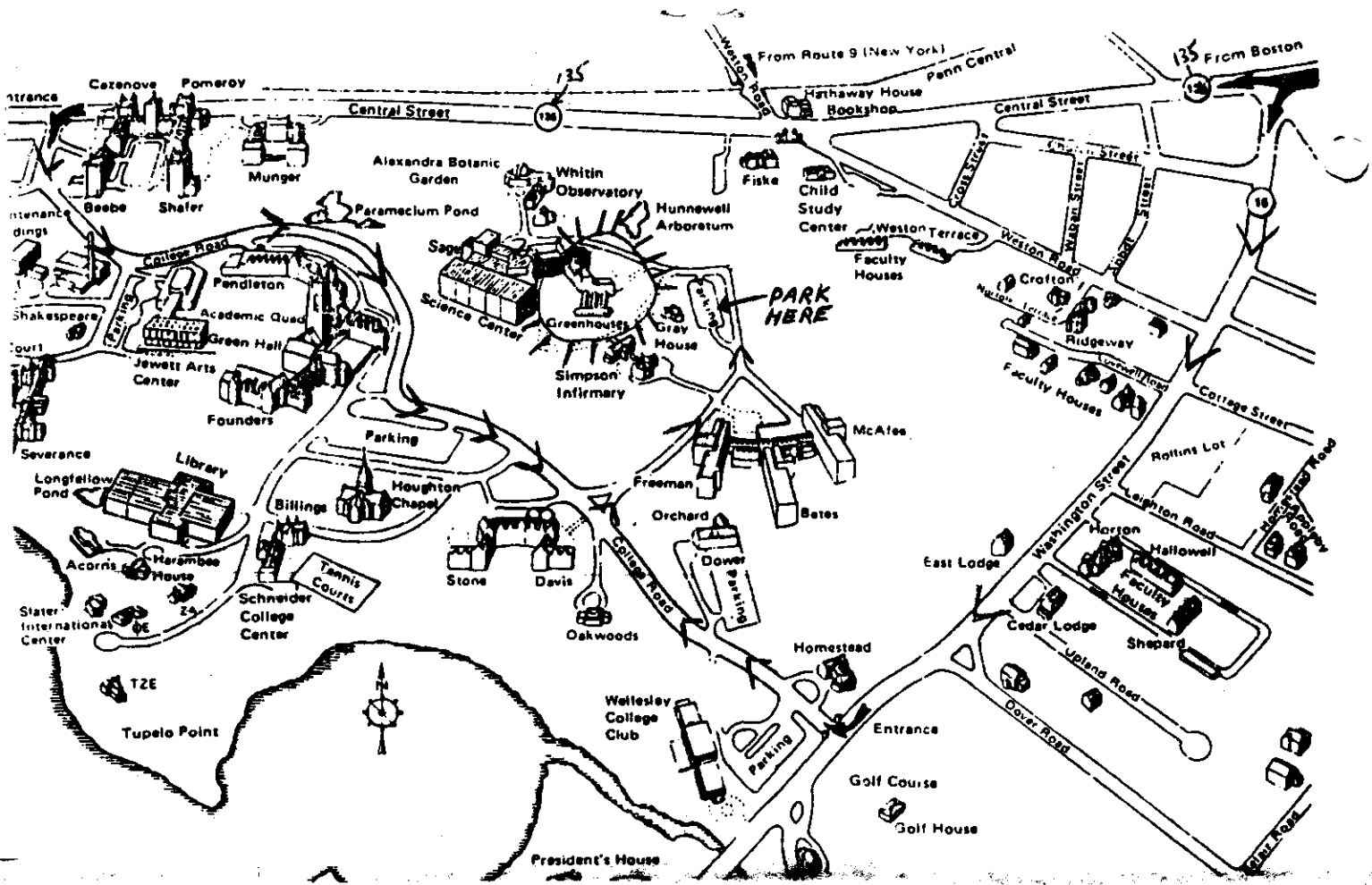
by Susan Fischler

The NEHS Winter Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 8, 1992 at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. The meeting will begin at 11:00 a.m. and will be held in room 155 of the Greenhouse building. After entering the building, turn right for room 155.

Lunch will follow the general business session and you should provide your own food. As usual, hot coffee and tea will be supplied by NEHS and donations of baked goods and snacks for the group would be most appreciated.

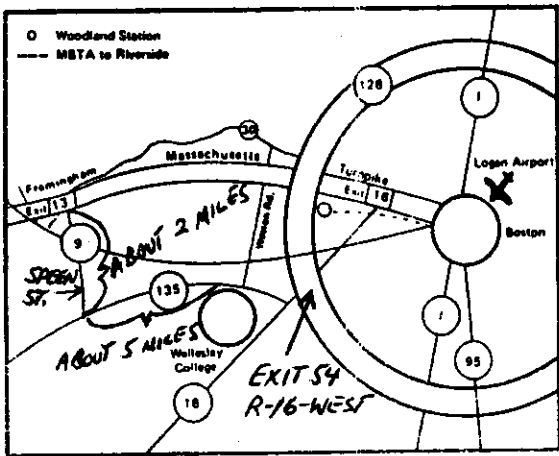
We are scheduled to be taken on a tour of the facility by Bunny Porter, docent. Also on the program is a discussion of heather garden design and you are being asked to bring slides or photographs of heather gardens to serve as a basis for the dialogue.

A map of the college campus indicating the Greenhouse and parking facilities is reproduced on the last page of the newsletter. A small inset shows the location of the college relative to major highways and the interstate system. Unfortunately, we didn't have a member make the actual trip from the Massachusetts Turnpike and list landmarks and distances. Good luck with your map reading skills and be careful if you have to travel on Route 9. It is a major thoroughfare with numerous small side streets and cars making right and left turns with little notice on the section of the road that goes through Wellsley.



**Northeast Heather Society**  
 P. O. Box 101  
 Airstead, NH 03602

NEHS MEETINGS:  
 FEB. 8th - 11:00 A.M.  
 WELLESLEY COLLEGE  
 MAY 2nd  
 SMITH COLLEGE



MEMBER UNTILL: 12/31/94  
 ELINDR COHEN  
 316 WOODLAND HILLS RD  
 WHITE PLAINS NY 10603