

# HEATHER NOTES

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## AIRBORNE URINE THREATENS HEATHS AND MOORS

**This article, by Fred Pearce is excerpted from the New Scientist of March 25th, 95 and gives yet another reason why naturalized heather is on the wane. We are indebted to Judith Schwartz of Marlow, NH, for passing it on to us. Hopefully, such articles will inspire us to keep heather growing in our corner of the world.**

Many of Europe's most precious natural habitats are being threatened by an unusual source of pollution. Scottish researchers have shown that airborne pollution is causing nitrogen to accumulate in the tissues of plants growing in threatened habitats such as sphagnum bogs, lowland heaths and heather moors. This build-up of nitrogen, ecologists believe, will attract pests and allow other plant species to invade these habitats, changing them forever. In many places, most of the nitrogen is coming from ammonia which has evaporated from animal urine.

Researchers led by Cariol Pitcairn of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Penicuik, near Edinburgh, have studied the nitrogen content of British sphagnum mosses and heather collected over the past forty years, and correlated these figures with measurements of the local fallout of nitrogen-containing compounds. They have found that nitrogen pollution is affecting both types of plant.

At the Moor House national nature reserve in Cumbria, England, for instance, the nitrogen content of sphagnum mosses has increased by 62 per cent over the past 30 years. Common heather, *Calluna vulgaris*, seems to be even harder hit, with air pollution appearing to be the main factor determining the nitrogen content of its tissues. The highest nitrogen content, around 2 - 6 per cent of dry weight, occurs in heather in eastern England, where the average annual fallout of nitrogen is 30 - 40 kilograms per hectare, six times greater than in the relatively unpolluted northwest of Scotland (*Environmental Pollution*, vol.88, p.193)

The source of nitrogen varies greatly from place to place, says Pitcairn. In Scotland, it mostly originates far away as nitrogen oxides from power stations and car exhausts, which travel on the wind and eventually fall as acid rain. But in the highly polluted southeast of England the main culprit is ammonia - the largest source of which is evaporation from animal urine in local slurry tanks and fields. A dairy cow produces 40 litres of urine a day, and research aircraft have recorded a tenfold increase in airborne ammonia as they pass over rich cattle pastures.

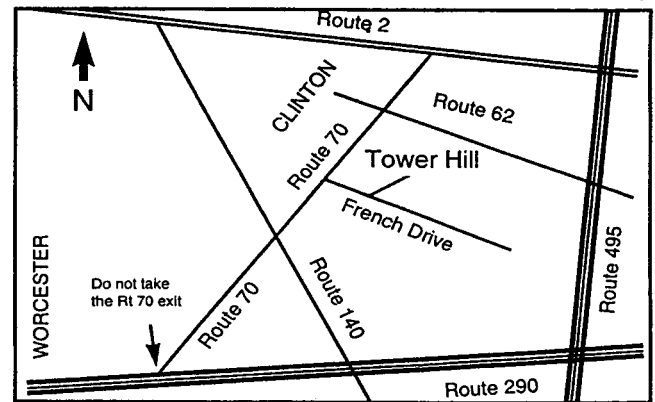
**The new results are worrying because heather and sphagnum mosses - and other plants which grow in nutrient-poor habitats - grow best with low inputs of nitrogen. The extra nitrogen they are now accumulating will attract heather beetles and other pests. It may also favour rival plants that thrive in nitrogen-rich soils, allowing them to invade these fragile habitats.**

"We can't yet say for certain that increased nitrogen in plants necessarily causes damage," says Pitcairn. But there is strong circumstantial evidence. *Calluna vulgaris* is declining in East Anglia's heaths, and in the southern Pennines many species of sphagnum are failing to reproduce.

The problem is not limited to Britain. Nitrogen deposition has risen more than tenfold across most of Europe during the past two decades, says Pitcairn.

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NEHS SUMMER MEETING - SAT. - JULY 13TH  
TOWER HILL BOTANIC GARDEN - BOYLSTON, MA



The summer meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 13th (rain or shine) at a new venue: Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, MA just outside Worcester. The Board will meet in Classroom A at the visitors center at 10A.M., followed by the General Meeting at 12 Noon. Please bring a packed lunch, and coffee and tea will be provided.

Tower Hill Botanic Garden is a living museum, owned and operated by the Worcester County Horticultural Society. The Society, founded in 1842, is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to "advancing the science, and encouraging and improving the practice of horticulture."

If you plan to tour the grounds with us, after the meeting, remember to wear comfortable, waterproof walking shoes. They tell us conditions at Tower Hill can be quite windy and cool, and what more could we hope for in July?

**SEE YOU THERE!**

## SPRING MEETING AT THE HAY ESTATE

Our meeting at The Fells: The Hay Estate, in Newbury, NH on April 20th, was well attended, with members coming from five states. After a slide presentation by Walter, we were given an introduction to the estate by a member of staff and shown pictures of the various stages of garden development.

However, it was not until after we had our lunch outside in the beautiful New Hampshire sunshine and continued conversations with "heather friends" that had begun in other gardens, in other states, at other times, that we saw the wonders of this garden.

Taking our various gardening tools with us, we toured the estate and gardens. There was heather at every turn and vast amounts had naturalized along the borders of woodland and probably escaped from earlier heather beds.

The large hillside Rock Garden also contained large numbers of heathers and the plants continued down the hillside in the direction of Lake Sunapee. But this was a day to work in and with the heather and there was much pruning, weeding and conversation in the heather. We hope that we made our mark on the garden and that we will be invited back by The Garden Conservancy that directs the preservation of the gardens. This is a very worthwhile garden to visit, if you are in the area. Full details on reaching it were given in our last issue.

**HAVE YOU RESERVED YET FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING, Sept. 27th-29th - Morristown, NJ?? SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE DETAILS.....**

## Fall Meeting Reminder: September 27 - 29

Heather lovers and their friends will assemble in Morristown, NJ on these dates for the 1996 annual meeting of NEHS and the "garden visits extravaganza." Late blooming callunas will still be showing their colors while the heavy budded early ericas will be showing hints of the glory to come. Also featured: great gardens, good food, nice people.

Haven't reserved your place yet for the Saturday, Sept. 28, garden tour? You should do so *now* while bus seats are still available. Or if you cannot come for the entire weekend, please join us for any part of the festivities that you can attend.

To refresh your memory, weekend activities are outlined below. (Details appeared in the April issue of *Heather Notes*, vol.6 #1. Or contact Orlan, address below, if you need more information.) Members who register now for the complete "package" will pay approximately \$65 per person. To reserve your place for the convention events send a deposit of \$25 per person now. If you are unable to come for the entire three day convention, we have listed the prices for individual events.

Friday evening, Sept. 27: We will gather informally for cocktails, socializing and plant talk from 5 to 7 pm at the home of Peggy and Al Storer. Just a few minutes away is a fine perennial garden to visit before we gather at the Storers. Friday events will be free to all NEHS members and their guests. Please come if you can.

Saturday, Sept. 28: Board our bus at the Governor Morris Hotel at 8:45 am for our gala tour of arboretums and spectacular private gardens. Our route will take us from Skylands at the north edge of NJ down to the Leonard J. Buck Garden in Far Hills - with stops at other gardens in between. We will also visit the Heart's Ease Greenhouse & Nursery. A box lunch will be available so that we can maximize our garden time. If you are only taking the bus tour, the fee will be \$25.

Our Saturday evening banquet and program begins at 6 pm. We have planned two speakers for this occasion. The first will help us with "Planning and Planting a Heather Garden" while the second will inspire us with "New and Irresistible Heathers for the Collector." The price for banquet and program will be \$40 if you wish to register for just this part of the convention.

Sunday, Sept. 29: Visit the Watnong Garden of Helen & Frank Donn. Also see Joyce Descloux's woodland and heather gardens which have been featured in major gardening magazines. In the afternoon join Roxanne Hiltz and Murray Turoff for more gardens, the plant sale and a gigantic barbecue and picnic. The separate fee for Sunday events will be \$10. What a bargain; we should have a big turnout for the Sunday program.

Headquarters for this meeting will be the Governor Morris Hotel in Morristown. The special rate for NEHS members will be \$79 for a room with a double bed, \$89 for two beds.

Advance registrants will receive a list of gardens and arboretums to visit on your way to or from Morristown. The Morristown area is awash with museums, antiques, crafts and historical sites. You will find much to interest other family members on this trip.

Your deposit now will reserve a place for you for the complete program or for individual events that you choose. (We do expect a sellout for the bus tour but, of course, we can handle a larger group at the other events.) Make your check payable to NEHS, and send it to Orlan Gaeddert at Box 25, Canaan NY 12029. Phone number is (518) 781-4662. **See you there!**

*continued from page 1, column 1*

**The Netherlands, where cattle and pigs outnumber humans, has the biggest problem. According to Ludger van der Eerden of the Research Institute for Agrobiology and Soil Fertility at Wageningen, ammonia fallout is probably the main reason why 35 per cent of Dutch heaths are now losing heather.**

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Do you call it dirt or soil? Not exactly a source of burning controversy, but ask a group of gardeners and you're likely to spark an interesting little debate. The global-minded might even vote for earth, remembering that famous NASA photo of our pretty blue planet.

Whatever you call it, I couldn't wait to get my fingers into it this spring after the cruel joke of The Winter That Just Wouldn't Stop. Ah, rebirth, rewarming and refreshment...and finally the sight of growing GREEN: isn't it grand? It's probably the only thing to keep us New Englanders from going completely cuckoo.

Now the rhodies and azaleas are in bloom, I've seen quite a lot of "snowline effect." That's where the flower buds and foliage below the snowline have survived, but above the snowline the flower buds were killed. Vegetative buds at the exposed part of the plant are just showing some spindly foliage development, while close to the ground the plant is in full, lush bloom like an old-fashioned lady with her petticoats showing.

My new heathers at Cold Comfort Farm are so little they were buried nicely almost all winter and show no sign of ill effect. Ditto no ill effects in the NEHS garden at Heritage Plantation on Cape Cod, where we pruned late (May 3rd) this year.

### OLD FRIENDS REMEMBERED

The Heritage garden is now six years old and is in full, mature glory: a beautiful tapestry of red, gray, green and gold on a sheltered hillside. Its creator, Al Doggart planted interlocking blocks of cultivars, and his plan was to prune those blocks "as one plant." The effect is stunning now that the plants have filed out and covered the hillside. If you're anywhere near the Cape this summer, I urge you to go out of your way to see this garden in Sandwich; it is worth the trip!

The best part of the pruning party, for me, was the surprise appearance of Al and his wife Nelda, who still keep an eye on this public garden despite their official retirement from active membership in NEHS.

### AN HISTORICAL THIGHSLAPPER

Why do all the good jokes involve bartenders, but never heather gardeners? Well, this discovery from a 1903 book, *The Heather in Lore, Lyric and Lay*, by Alexander Wallace, is as close to a good thighslapper as it gets. A Scotsman by birth and an educated man, Wallace emigrated to the U.S. (to take up what career, he tells us not) where he evidently rubbed elbows with the horticultural bigwigs of the day.

He relates the story of quite a controversy that was swirling around heather circles - YES! heather circles - in the 1860's: is calluna native to North America? There had been sightings, he tells us, in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and stories of heather fields in Massachusetts as far back as 1700. Then in July 1861, Jackson Dawson, a young professional gardener and later superintendent of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, exhibited a pot of calluna vulgaris at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's summer show. It created a stir instantly. Where did this come from? they wanted to know. Oh, it grows wild in a field out in Tewksbury, replied young Jack.

The chase was on. The MHS dispatched its Flower Committee to Tewksbury to bring in the wild heather. They found it in a low meadow near the state almshouse, spread over half an acre suspiciously close to the farm of an expatriot Scotsman. The committee interrogated the farmer John Strachan, surmising he had planted it in a fit of sentimentality for his native Scotland.

"Wada I hae been a fule, mon, to sow it on another man's land, when my ain as guid wad hae grown it as weel?" replied farmer Strachan. Gotcha! The committee's report was inconclusive, but it floated the tantalizing thought that heather might have been indigenous once but died out, the Tewksbury meadow being the last little pocket on a heathery Lost Horizon.

Nowadays we think not, but 135 years ago this summer, the "Native Heather Question" was a hot topic in Boston. The affair merited a send-up in the Feb 22nd, 1862 issue of Vanity Fair magazine, quoted in part as follows:

"A few days ago, as the sun was busily employed in gilding a very pretty landscape, the passers along a quiet lane at Tewksbury, near Boston, were arrested by a novel and curious sight. Several elderly men, some of them stoutish, others scraggyish, but all of solid and respectable appearance, were seen scattered over an area of an acre or so in extent, apparently occupied in the process of grazing, or pasturing themselves upon the scanty herbage, their postures being of the fashion known as 'all-fours,' and their heads close to the ground. ... At last, however, a smart shower of rain came down, upon which the mysterious grubbers arose precipitately to their feet and toddled off to a neighboring farmhouse for shelter. Here it transpired, upon inquiry, that the strangers were certain WISE MEN of Boston, forming in the aggregate what is called the 'Flower Committee' of that city, and that they had been occupied in investigating the subject of a 'native heather,' said to have been discovered in the field just deserted by them."



"Vanity Fair's" Cartoon of the Flower Committee of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society Searching for the Heather at Tewksbury, Mass.

**Judy Wiksten**

## WE MOURN THE LOSS OF FRANCES A. 'CHANNY' BROKAW



*Sprigs of Mother's Heather*  
by Susan E. Brokaw

"Channy" Brokaw, NEHS Board Member and "heather" friend died on April 26th, at her home in Strafford, VT. Channy and her husband Dick had retired to live on a hill in Vermont and as she was an avid weaver and loomed colorful cloth, she covered her hillside with a tapestry of heathers.

With her deep faith as a Quaker, she lived a life of service to others. To her family, of course, but also as president of the PTA and Girl Scout Leader. She had been active with the League of Women Voters and served on its Ohio state board as president. She continued her volunteer work when she moved to Vermont, serving with Family Place in White River Junction and the Adult Basic Education program in Randolph. She also served on the Board of Directors of Kendal, at Hanover, NH from 1988-94.

On March 8th, your Editor received a note from Channy in which she commented that her "personal survival goal is to plant more heather with my husband Dick" She went on to tell of the enjoyment that she had received from NEHS and its members over the years. It was signed, "Love in heather, Channy".

Our thoughts are with her husband Dick and her four children

### REPORT FROM THE SOUTHLAND - Ted Barraclough - Seneca, South Carolina

It is March here in upstate South Carolina. Winter's back is broken and spring colors are beginning to appear. The camellias came first and now the daffodils. These will be quickly followed by flowering pears and then the dogwoods and redbuds. Until this burst of color, the only bright spot in the winter landscape was my *Erica dartyensis*. They bloomed at Christmas and are still in full flower. I will be adding many more of those.

Last spring's disastrous drowning of my heather

plantings taught me that the one essential soil amendment is sand, lots and lots of sand. Growing anything in this heavy red clay requires adding sand for drainage. Adding organic matter helps, but not if it greatly increases water retention.

I began planting seeds the first week in January, in my makeshift greenhouse. I am quite proud and amazed at the success I have had with a very simple arrangement. On a bench in my unheated garage I have a heating mat with a grow light suspended over it. The mat is 22" x 60", of heavy rubber with a thermostat. The sensing element was designed to be inserted in the soil of a flat, but this proved rather cumbersome. Instead, the sensor bulb is immersed in a jar of water sitting on the mat.

I start seeds in 11" x 22" plastic trays with perforated bottoms. These are nested in a solid bottom tray so I can bottom water by lifting the top tray. With the top tray filled with a soilless mix, I divide it with cardboard strips in proportion to the number of seeds in each packet. A two inch strip crosswise is plenty of room for a packet of 25 seeds. A minor limitation with my super greenhouse is that I can only have a single germination temperature. A more serious problem arises when I begin picking out seedlings. The two inch strip now needs a space twelve inches. With the garage unheated, the result is trays of cell packs cluttering our sun room until they can be put outdoors.

While I am expounding on my greenhouse, I would also like to pass on a word about two of my favorite tools. I use a seven inch masons trowel for filling cell packs and for leveling seed trays. The point allows you to pack the mix into each cell. The pointed trowel is also great for setting out plants and even planting bulbs. The other tool that works well for me is a pickle fork. This small, three tined fork is ideal for picking out seedlings. I also find that by using it's grown up brother, the table fork, I can remove plants from cell packs without destroying the plastic. Yes, I am cheap, I wash and reuse cell packs.

When we bought our house, I did not realize the consequence of living under a canopy of pines. Pines shed an incredible amount of needles, not to mention cones, twigs and bark. Gutter cleaning is a flourishing local industry. It is done by climbing on a roof with a leaf blower to blow pine needles off the roof as well as out of the gutters. Raking a lawn area 10' x 10' yields two wheelbarrows of needles. While this is great mulch around shrubs, I seem to have a large surplus. Anyone out there interested in free pine needle mulch??, please come on down and rake my lawn.

**Ted**

### **THE PLANT DOCTOR IS IN**

We had an inquiry from a member, on behalf of a friend who grows heather in a very warm climate (Hawaii). She was having difficulty with some of her *Callunas* and wanted to know if heathers required a period of dormancy to do their best?

We made inquiry of heather authorities on both sides of the Atlantic and the consensus was that heathers do not require a period of dormancy. The reasons given for this varied, but all agreed that a period of dormancy was not required for heather.

It was pointed out, that where heathers are in a constant period of growth, they have been found to be more susceptible to fungus attacks. The life span of the

plants is also shortened and may be a period of 10 - 11 years. There would seem to be a similarity here to containerized heathers that have been forced into quick growth through fertilization and such.

Another recent concern was from a member in New England who had a heather garden. They had sold their home and moved into a condo apartment, where the grounds were maintained by the condo development and they did not think they could plant anything in proximity to their apartment.

They asked for information about growing heather in containers on their deck. We have made numerous inquiries, but have been unable to come up with anyone who grows in containers in our cold climate. Of course, heathers could be treated like annuals in containers and discarded as the weather gets colder and new plants put in in the spring.

However, can heathers be maintained in containers over the winter in zones 4-5? What size containers would be necessary? What exposure? What type of soil mix and drainage, etc.? If you have grown or now grow heather in containers, please let us hear from you. Growing this way is very common on the West coast. The NAHS is even having a contest, at its annual meeting, where they will judge pictures of members containerized heathers. However, the situation is much different in our much colder climate. So let us know of your experiences in this area.

**Send in your questions to the PLANT DOCTOR and we will try harder.**

### **HEATHERS THAT SURVIVED THE VERY DRY SUMMER OF 95 AND THE VERY COLD WINTER THAT FOLLOWED - RHS GARDEN at Wisley**

The heather garden at the Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley in Surrey was the first of three national collections of heathers authorized by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG). It now contains 12 beds and over 800 varieties of heather. At least it contained that number prior to the very dry summer of 95 and the very cold past winter. Wisley obtains much of its water from a river and is allocated an amount that it can pump from it. Last summer was very dry and it seems that someone made a miscalculation as to how much water was pumped from the river, so even that source of water was cut off.

The heathers went into the winter months with little water and were thus, in a weakened condition. I made a survey of the 10 older beds, in late May and following is a list of heathers that seem to have survived the best.

In general *Erica carneas* would seem to have done the best. Of the *Callunas*, the ones with brighter foliage seemed to do best. Heather in beds with less competition from trees, both within and without did best.

(We have long complained about the RHS planting trees, mostly birches in and around the heather beds. Upon reading the sign-board at the entrance to the heather garden closely, I find that it is not only a heather collection but also a collection of birch trees. **I don't know why the RHS agreed to this combination planting and something should be done to stop and reverse the birch trees in the heather beds. Also to trim the large trees that shade the beds**)

The following listed plants seem to the writer to have survived the harsh growing conditions that killed many

will not be known to growers in the USA. It is well to refer to the list with a copy of the "Handy Guide to Heathers" by David & Anne Small, at hand.

**The majority of the plants listed can be obtained from growers in the USA, but you will have to hunt for them. The purpose of this list is that if these plants survived harsh conditions that killed many others, they should be better able to survive in our gardens. So ...SCAN THIS LIST WHEN YOU WANT TO ACQUIRE NEW PLANTS FOR YOUR GARDEN:**

**Erica carneas:** R.B.Cook, Winter Melody, Heathwood, Carnea, Aurea, Alan Coates, Adrienne Duncan, Pirbright Rose, Praecox Rubra, Porter's Red, Red Rover, Beoley Pink, Barry Sellers, Winter Beauty, January Sun, Lake Garda, Golden Starlet, Ice Princess, Hillefte, Rotes Juel, Rosalie, Platts Surprise, Orient, Winter Sonne, Challenger, Schneekuppe, Winter Snow, Polden Pride, Isabell, Sherwood Creeping, James Backhouse, Springwood Pink, Queen of Spain, March Seedling, Atrorubra, Myretoun Ruby, Rosa,

**Calluna vulgaris:** Winter Red, Fred J. Chapple, Gold Mist, White Rocket, Brita Elizabeth, Sam Hewitt, Cream Steving, Cramond, Glencoe, Kirby White, Kerstin, October White, Alba Dumosa, Dart's Parrot, Gold Spronk, Sampford Sunset, Mirelle, Dark Star, Golden Max, Brayhead, Anneke, Peper & Salt, Allegretto, Iris van Leyen, Lemon Gem, Dart's Squirrel, Tino, Nordlicht, Fire Star, Doris Rushworth, Darleyensis, Braemar, Holstein, Annemarte, Destree, Cottswold Gold, Spicata, Punch's Dessert, Colette, Elegant Pearl, Tomentosa Alba, Battle of Arnheim, Whiteness, Blueness, Catherine Anne, Japanese White, Firestar, Sesam, Perestrojka, Arina, Amilto, Alba Jae, Kit Hill, Sonning, Mrs. Neal Collins, Herbert Mitchell, Lyles Late White, Serlet, Islay Mist, Jan, Jan Dekker, Wingates Gold, Silver Cloud, Alba Elegans, Minty, Dunkeld White, Walter Ingwersen, Red Fred, Ide's Double, London's Pride, Alba Rigida, Silver Stream, Skipper, Elkstone, Islay Mist, Olive Turner, Joan Sparkes, Schurig's Sensation, Julia, Dart's Brilliant, Strsson, Clare Carpet, Alba Dumosa, Winter Red, Wingates Gem, White Carpet, Bonfire Brilliance, Lyle's Surprtsse, Tib, Glen Mashie, E.Hoare, Firefly, Pyramidalis, Janice Chapman, Tom's Fancy, Prize Winner, Pyrenaica, Winter Fire, Peter Sparkes, Mairs Variety, Torogay, Torulosa, Hetty, Flore Pleno, Angela Wain, Ida M. Britten, Silver Gem, Dart's Silver Rocket, Spring Gold, Alba Multiflora Limelight, Dainty Bess, Soay

**Erica x watsonii:** Dorothy Metheny

**Erica arborea:** Alpina

**Erica tetralix:** Helma, Rubra, Melbury White

**Erica terminalis**

**Erica ciliaris:** Aurea

**Erica cinerea:** Robert Michael, Felthorpe, Snow Cream, Lorna Anne Hutton, Sue Lloyd, Mrs. Dill, Hookstone White, Rose Queen, Spicata, Mrs. Ford

**Erica x darleyensis:** George Rendall, James Smith, Erecta, Bud Lyle, Epe, Silberschmelze, Archie Graham, White Gown, J.W.Porter, Dunwood Splendor, Norman R. Webster, White Perfection, Mary Helen, Mrs. Parrts Red,

White Glow

**Bruckenthalia spiculifolia**

**Erica vagans:** Carnea, Rubra, Chittendentii, Nana, Golden Triumph, Grandiflora, Ida M. Britten, Valerie Smith, Kevernensis Alba

**Daboecia canabrica:** Purpurea, Cupido, Blueless

**Erica manipuliflora: x Erica vagans:** Valerie Griffiths

**Erica eriogena:** Alba Compacta, Hibernica, Hibernica Alba, Brian Proudly, Ivory, Ewan Jones

**Erica williamsii:** P.D.Williams

**While it does not necessarily follow that heathers not included on this list are not hardy (as we have said some plant labels were missing and broken and other plants in the middle of beds may not have been seen or been able to have been reached) all things considered, these heathers may fare better in our gardens. It is my understanding that a list of heathers that survived in the National Collection at Cherry Bank in Perth, Scotland has been prepared and it will be interesting to cross-reference it against this list.**

Walter

#### THE HEATHER AT MY DOOR - Neil Munro - 1896

If I were king of France, that noble fine land,

And the gold was elbow deep within my chests,

And my castles lay in scores along the wine-land

With towers as high as where the eagle nests;

If harpers sweet, and swordsmen stout and vaunting

My history sang, my stainless tartan wore,

Was not my fortune poor, with one thing wanting---

The heather at my door.

My galleys every ocean might be sailing,

Robbing the isles and sacking hold and keep,

My chevaliers with loyalty unflinching

Might bring me back of cattle, horse and sheep,

Soft arms be round my neck, the young heart's tether,

And true love-kisses all the night might fill,

But oh! Machree, if I had not the heather

Before me on the Hill

A hunter's fare is all I would be craving,

A shepherd's plaiding and a beggar's pay,

If I might earn them where the heather, waving,

Gave fragrance all the day.

The stars might see me, homeless one and weary,

Without a roof to fend me from the dew,

And still, content, I'd find a bedding cherry,

Where the heather grew.



## **LONGWOOD GARDENS, Kennett Square, PA, REVISITED**

After visiting the Philadelphia Flower Show, at its new and enlarged downtown location, I stayed overnight and visited Longwood Gardens. The 75 year old central greenhouse is closed for repairs through this summer and entrance fees are reduced to \$8.00 and \$6.00 on Tuesdays. 18 of the greenhouses remain open and the Mediterranean Garden House had a number of *Ericas*, most of which were in bloom.

*Erica persoluta*, *Erica coccinea*, *Erica perspicua*, *Erica cerinthoides*, *Erica taxifolia*, *Erica lateralis* and *Erica pinea* were the only ones whose labels could be seen and there were several others on display also.

The outside heather garden, part of which is on a hillside and part on the other side of a path in an island bed, continues to be poorly maintained. Little is being done to upgrade the heathers and more grasses and Hellebores are being planted.

There are at least 4 River Birch, some maples and pines directly in the beds. *Erica c.* 'Springwood white' was nicely mulched with needles and in bloom, but the bed was full of dead leaves. A bit of *Erica x darleyensis* 'Furzey' was in bloom but dead "decorative" grass was all around it? *Calluna vul.* 'County Wicklow' and 'Branchy Ann' looked good as did 'Blazeaway'.

There are three benches overlooking the garden and it is sad that there is not more heather to look at. With all of the resources of the garden, one wonders why it finds it so difficult to maintain the heather garden?

There was a magnificent display of *Hamamelis Intermedia* and *Mollis* in bloom and the flowers on the shrubs really lit up the bleak season in the garden. (The witchhazel in my garden was a month late in blooming this year)

**Walter**

### **FROM THE EDITOR**

I guess this is the place for these few thoughts. I may not be much of a gardener, but I do enjoy Flower Shows and seeing how others DO IT. I was able to get to the Boston Flower Show, Philadelphia Show, & Keene, NH Flower Show in this country. I also visited the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, Malvern Show and Chelsea Flower Show, in England.

I was out of the country for longer than usual, some 45 days and found a large batch of NEHS mail, on my return, so that was the reason for the delay in getting back to members who had written in. I am also having problems with the computer, after not having used it for such a long period of time. It may have suffered from dampness in the house or perhaps it missed me, but I will have to take it for repairs if and when I finish this newsletter.

While most of the trip was spent in England, I spent the last week in Bulgaria. I had always wanted to see the rose fields in bloom, from which they gather the petals and make about 80% of the worlds attar of roses. I was able to visit the "officially closed to the public" garden of Krichim, which seems to have been the estate of their deceased King Borris. It was then taken over by the communists and is now occupied by the present leaders of the country. It is a huge Botanic Garden with ponds and greenhouses (no heather was seen) but it is very difficult to get inside to view it.

After my guide and I got inside, we met the chief

horticulturist as we were wandering in the huge garden. He couldn't understand how we had gotten in. We became friendly and then we had difficulty getting out, as he had to show us everything. I will be sending him some heather seeds and books on horticulture as they have limited access to such from the outside world. If anyone is interested in a trip to Bulgaria, I have a good Bulgarian Travel Agent who will take you to see what YOU want to see.

Needless to say, the garden went to pot while I was away, but fortunately we had quite a bit of rain. This was an odd winter. There was only a little damage to heathers, but I lost 8 magnolias and a few rhododendrons. I had some of the magnolias for 10 years and don't know why this was such a bad winter for them? Others survived, of the same type that died and I see no pattern for this??

We certainly thank those who contributed something for the newsletter, but we have not had our usual number of articles from members. I hope we can attribute this to the demands of the garden in spring. Now that things have been gotten back in some order, I hope that you will favor us with a few words about your heathers, or questions that you may have about them? We keep getting people writing and asking "if they can grow heather in Indiana or Idaho, etc." Comments about your growing results in such places and anywhere else, for that matter, are of great interest and help to many.

If we don't get more articles, I will have to tell you more about the number of stray dogs in Bulgaria and such...I look forward to chatting with you further at our annual meeting in NJ.

**Walter**

### **HEATHER CHECKLIST**

**Make sure that your heathers are adequately mulched.**

**Keep new heathers watered regularly for at least the first year. Try to give *Erica tetralix* somewhat more water than other mature plants or place it in a damper area, for better growth and bloom.**

**Keep weeding..... Remove dead leaves that may have fallen on your plants.**

**Prior to mid-July give your heathers a shower of half-strength, K-Mart Acid Fertilizer or Miracid. Mix in a tablespoon of Epsom Salts with the hose-spray container of fertilizer. (use the balance of epsom salts to soak your feet after a hard day in the garden)**

**Watch your plants regularly to see that they have not been dug up by animals and if so, replace at once, before roots dry out.**

**Try to give your heathers as much sun as possible for peak bloom. Prune any overhanging branches and try to locate new beds in sunny locations.**

**Plant small pots of heathers rather than large mature plants. Give them adequate space to develop in. This will give you an opportunity to enjoy their growth and they will acclimate to your growing conditions much easier than larger plants will.**

**Take time out to enjoy your heather, be it one plant or a hundred.**

### THIS AND THAT

Wayne Olson of Suffern, NY has had a research paper "Heat Stress Proteins and AIDS" published in the medical journal "The Archives of STD/HIV Research". His thesis is that there is a *Calluna vulgaris* in Poland that can be used for antiviral activity. He is expecting to make a trip to Poland to bring back needed plant material

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The German Heather Society will sponsor a trip to see botanic and historical points of interest in South Africa, for two weeks, the last week of Sept.-Oct.97. The tour is scheduled to leave from Frankfurt, Germany and the round-trip will cost about 5,000DM, with 12 nights hotels, 2 meals a day and a German speaking guide on bus tours. There is a one week extension to Namibia at extra cost.

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Nominations are being accepted for a new annual award for Moorland Gamekeepers with a 500 British Pound cash prize and a trophy, announced by the Joseph Nickerson Heather Improvement Foundation.

It will recognize the contribution made towards the successful management of heather moorland resulting in benefit to sporting, farming, recreational and local interests.

The deadline is June 30th, 1996. Details may be obtained from Mr. P.G.Shillington at The Foundation, Rothwell, Lincoln, England. **From the Farmers Guardian-May 3rd issue --so if you know any gamekeepers....**

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The 26th annual conference of the British Heather Society (THS) will be held September 6th - 9th, 1996 at Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset. Your president and editor plan to attend. The 1997 conference is tentatively scheduled for the Lake District.

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The NAHS conference 96 is August 23 - 25th. The theme is "Heather in the Redwoods". Payments were due by June 1st...call conference chair Dee Daneri at 707-725-3452, if you will be in California and want to attend. See last issue for more info.

### BOOK NOOK

Following is a list of heather books available for purchase by NEHS members. Individual prices are listed for each book, or a range of prices depending on condition. PLEASE ADD \$2.50 shipping for the first book and \$1.50 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL BOOK. Make checks payable to NEHS and send to the address on the cover of the newsletter.

David & Anne Small, "Handy Guide To Heathers, soft cover, spiral bound, 115 pgs., 1992. This book is sponsored by the British Heather Society and lists descriptions of over 1,000 varieties. \$9.00 (new)

D.F.Maxwell & P.S.Patrick, "The English Heather Garden", 184 pgs. 1966, \$17-18 (used) some pictures in color. The authors were students at the RHS Gardens, Wisley, Surrey. Maxwell founded the heather nursery of Maxwell and Beale, Ltd in Dorset and Patrick joined him as nursery manager. They brought over 50 years of growing and living with heathers to this book. It is dedicated to their wives, both of whom have had *Callunas* named after them, 'Mrs. D.F.Maxwell' & 'Mrs. Pat'.

David McClintock, 'A Guide To the Naming of Plants'-With Special Reference to Heathers", written for THS, softcover, 38 pgs. \$5.00 (used)

Brian & Valerie Proudly, "Heathers in Colour", 192 pgs., many colored pictures, various editions - \$14-15 (used)

A.T.Johnson, "Hardy Heaths and Some of Their Nearer Allies", 127pgs., some pictures, 1956 & various editions. This book was listed by Maxwell & Patrick as having been a help to them. It is a smaller book and has a chapter on companion plants for the heather garden. First Edition \$18.00, others \$10-14.00 (used)

Harry Van De Laar, "The Heather Garden", 1978, 160 pgs., some colored pictures. This book was translated from Dutch and the author is active with the Dutch Heather Society. -\$19.00 (used)

John F. Letts, "Hardy Heaths & The Heather Garden", 1966, softcover, 128 pgs., some pictures, \$14.00, hardcover - \$16.00 (used) Letts owned the Foxhollow nursery in Surrey.

Fred J. Chapple, "The Heather Garden", 180 pgs., various editions, some pictures and drawings, \$16-18 (used) He was the first president of the British Heather Soc.

Terry L. Underhill, "Heaths & Heathers", various editions, 1972, 256 pgs., (varies according to edition) colored pictures and drawings. He is a British garden writer and some editions were published in the USA with a slant to our growing conditions, supposedly?? Gives an interesting history on the uses of the plant besides growing info., etc. \$16-18 (used)

Dorothy Metheny, "Hardy Heather Species", softcover, 186 pgs., 1991, published by NAHS, contains line drawings and cultural and botanical info. on various heather species. SPECIAL PRICE- \$13.00 postpaid (new)

**NEHS issues a list of available books for sale and members may request this updated list with current information. As you can imagine, these books are difficult to obtain and in short supply.**

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SEE PAGE 2 FOR FULL DETAILS AND ACT NOW