

HEATHER NOTES

VOL.7-NO.2

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Heather Society - 1997

HEATHER HONEY

Some excerpts from "Honey Farming", by
R.O.B.Manley, 1946, London

Heather honey is a very valuable product. Its flavour does not suit everyone's palate, but it is greatly preferred by those who do like it, so much so, that there is always a demand for it that far exceeds the supply, and consequently its price is higher than that of ordinary honey. Some people think it is more nutritious than other honey.

The common bell-heather and cross-leaved heath, though they give plenty of honey, do not give heather honey and it is not to get this type of honey that beekeepers take their bees to the moors.

The plant I am dealing with then is the familiar ling or *Calluna vulgaris*. It comes into bloom after the summer flowers are over, and this makes it far more valuable to the bee farmer than it would be if it yielded its honey at the same time; for he is able to move bees to the moors, if not to distant, and at least to stand a good chance of adding to his main crop a supplementary harvest of heather honey.

The honey from ling is a distinctive product, being a jelly and not a flowing liquid, except when agitated. When it is stirred up it becomes much like any other honey, but only for a short time, it soon re-jellifies again. This peculiar property is called 'thixotropy', and those who like to call things by long names can use that term instead of saying that heather honey jells. If you cut a comb of ling honey it will not run, and after it has been in jars for a short time, you can turn the bottles upside down and the honey will not run out.

The distinctive characteristic of jellifying makes it impossible to remove heather honey from the combs by means of the usual centrifugal honey extractors. It must be pressed out, as a general rule, but there are 'honey-looseners' that are supposed to make extracting possible. They consist of a number of blunt metal needles that are arranged so that they can be jiggled up and down in the cells, thus causing the jellied honey to liquefy, after which the combs are put through an extractor quickly before the honey can re-jellify.

The gelatinous nature of this honey has the effect of making it retain all the air bubbles that are introduced in pressing it from the combs, and these bubbles remain suspended in it, even if the honey is heated enough to make it run through a fine strainer. The bubbles give the product a very distinctive and pleasing appearance.

The color of heather honey varies a good deal according to the district it comes from: probably the soil has something to do with this. Its flavor also varies, being stronger in honey from the granite districts of Scotland than from many other localities. Many people seem to prefer a blended heather honey giving it a milder taste.

I began by taking 33 bee colonies to the heather and extended the business to the extent of taking 330. But it is an uncertain affair, taking bees to heather. One year you get a big yield; another you may get nothing. That was what happened in 1944. There was not so much as a smell of the stuff in the hives; but some years the

+++++

SUMMER MEETING - SUNDAY, JULY 13th, THE HAY ESTATE (THE FELLS) - 11:00AM

Join with us to see this wonderful garden and mansion overlooking Lake Sunapee, in Newbury, NH. It has one of the largest areas of naturalized heather in New England. There is also much other heather in the Rock Garden and other areas. You will be able to see the site of the new Chaney Brokaw Memorial Heather Garden that some of our members have been working on.

The formal meeting will consist of a slide lecture on National Plant Collections in Britain, with the emphasis on heather (although we may deviate to such plants as rhubarb, *Rheum rhaponticum*)

We will then entertain questions on culture and share our joys and sorrows in the heather garden with other members. This will be followed by lunch (bring your own)

We will then tour the extensive gardens and not only see the heathers but other extensive gardens and a large perennial border.

Please check on the location of the meeting, at the Gate House, as you enter or look for a sign.

From points south and east take I-89 north to Exit 9 (Route 103). Go west 13 miles to Newbury. Then take Route 103A north 2.2 miles to The Fells, which will be on your left.

From points north, take I-89 south to Exit 12 (Route 11). Turn right off the ramp, then take an immediate left on 103A south. Follow 103A for 5.6 miles to the Fells, which will be on your right.

(Look for Lake Sunapee on your NH map and the Hay Estate is on the south-east end)

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ON JULY 13th!

+++++

crop was quite a large one. There must have been quite seventy pounds in the supers of many of the hives.

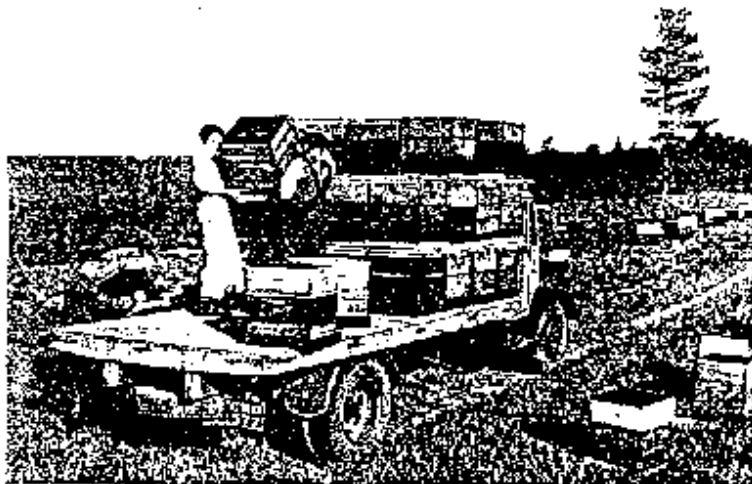
Bees are usually transported to the moors at night, arriving in the early morning. On arrival the hives are unloaded and placed on the ground in sets of two to eight and are faced in different directions. Never set heather stocks in rows or they will drift badly. Bees should be released as soon as possible after reaching their destination, and you may expect a good deal of stinging if you give the bees a chance to get at you, for they always seem vicious at these times.

Ling is a rather erratic yielder of nectar. Sometimes bees are able to begin to store from it directly the first flowers open; at other times the bees may stand in the midst of huge quantities of heather bloom and get nothing from it. I have seen bees working ling eagerly within a quarter of an hour after being released on arrival at the heath, and I have known them to fail to do anything with it for weeks. A few years ago I went down to see what the bees were doing about two weeks after they had been set out on the heather moors. I was disappointed to find that, while the heather was almost past its best, in appearance, the bees had done nothing with it. After about 10 days I again went to have a look, thinking the bees might perhaps as well be brought

home. The weather was not any better during this second visit, but on arrival, I could plainly smell the honey. On looking into the hives I found whole supers filled right up and saw the need for more storage room. Instead of bringing the bees home, we took more supers to them, and a good many of these were partly filled within a few days.

Heather honey-flows begin suddenly and leave off in the same abrupt manner, in my experience. They may begin right at the first flowering, or be delayed until almost the end. A heather honey-flow may last two weeks or it may only continue for a day or two - or it may not occur at all. But a really heavy heather honey flow is an inspiring thing. Bees gather the stuff so rapidly and store it so fast in the combs that everything seems to become blocked up with honey in a very short time.

When one of these flows is going on, a remarkable circumstance is the profuse secretion of wax. Every corner seems to be used to deposit wax, and a great deal of brace comb may be built. There must be some special property of heather honey that conduces to the secretion of beeswax, for I have found that when, as we sometimes do, we give the wet supers after the honey has been scraped from the combs, to colonies that we want to feed, the bees deposit masses of wax all around the feed holes in the inner covers through which they are allowed access to the supers.



Loading bees for return from heather

When there is a heavy flow from ling a curious circumstance is that although you may walk through the heather and hear a continual hum all around you, you can hardly see a single bee. The reason is that heather blooms in compact masses, the flowers almost in contact, so that when the bees reach the flowers they scramble from one to another without flight, but keep up a gentle humming all the time. Much the same is seen when a thick plant of white clover is yielding heavily.

Another curious fact about heather honey is that while bees are working the ling plant they are almost always unusually spiteful. It is hardly ever possible, in my experience, to go among the hives of bees that are engaged with a flow of heather nectar, without a veil. In a good flow from clover or similar plants it is generally possible, not only to pass among the stocks, but even to open and handle them without a veil; but in the case of heather honey-flows the case is very different. (to be cont.)

HEATHERS ARE NOT FOR EVERYONE! (This is a summary of a talk that Hank Van Dine, of Grand Isle, VT, gave at our 1996 annual meeting in NJ.)

Heathers are not for everyone! That is the way I started my little talk, hoping to wake us all from our afternoon slumber. At the NEHS annual meeting in Morristown, NJ, early last fall, I was asked to give a short presentation for beginning heather gardeners, regarding the basics of heather gardening. I immediately countered that bad-news declaration with the good news: **BUT THEY CAN BE FOR ANYONE!** Then I tried to develop a few basic principles that I feel are important for the success of heather gardening. Following are some of these principles.

It is important to stress to beginning heather gardeners and those interested in possible becoming heather gardeners, that heathers do have some special requirements for healthy growth and longevity. Better a few happy heather enthusiasts than a large number of disgruntled heather have-beens. I wish I could tell you the number of people who have told me over the years, "You can't grow heathers here," with disdain in their voices. These are folks in hardiness zones ranging from zone 7 to zone 3. On the other hand, I am pleasantly amazed at the number of people who come up to us at the Vermont Flower Show in Burlington, who are successfully growing heathers in zone 3. The difference is in the gardener's awareness of and ability to provide acceptable conditions for these wonderful rascals.

So, what do they need? **GOOD DRAINAGE. DRAINAGE, DRAINAGE!** It is my humble opinion that this is, by far, the most important requirement for healthy heather and heath. If you have naturally good soil drainage, such as that of our sandy coastal regions, then you are well on your way to becoming a successful heather gardener. If, on the other hand, you happen to be one of the many of us who has heavy clay soil, or hard-pan subsoil that prevents quick run-off of water, or that nasty condition that new home builders create of heavily compacted sub-soil and practically no topsoil, then you must be willing to make the necessary corrections to your site. If you are not, then heathers are not for you.

How many times have you read or heard that if you have a problem with heavy or poorly drained soil, the way to correct that problem is to add organic matter such as peat moss; or sand; or a combination of the two? I'll guarantee that if you add sand to heavy clay soil, you will end up with something that closely resembles concrete. But, most important, no matter what you do to amend heavy soil, if you do it in the hole where you plan to plant heather, you will not correct the problem, because you are simply creating what we call the "bathtub effect". Think about it: if you have beautiful light organic soil that is still surrounded by heavy soil, every time it rains, where is the water going to collect? Probably it will sit in and saturate that nice porous soil, just as in a bathtub, and sure as shootin' your heather plants will rot.

If you have poorly drained soil, the best way to create a soil environment that will grow healthy heather is to build up raised beds above the heavy soil. Doing this not only allows you the opportunity to create a good environment for the roots of your plants; it also allows you the opportunity to create a more interesting

landscape, with mounds and rolls and boulders and rock outcroppings. Soils that are loose and friable, have plenty of organic matter, lots of pore space for air, and are on the acidic side of neutral, are what heather gardeners must strive for. The closer you come to that type of soil, the happier your heathers will be.

Assuming that you have been able to meet this basic and foremost requirement, there are several other considerations to keep in mind. Heathers need to be kept moist during the first year or two of establishment. This is something we have to be extremely careful about here at the nursery. If a plant dries out hard in a pot or when newly planted in beds, chances are it is gone. Once a heather is established in the landscape, it can tolerate dry times, but at the beginning constant moisture is important.

The site chosen for growing heather should ideally be sunny or partly sunny. It appears to me that as you get into the warmer regions, heathers seem happier with some filtered shade. As you get further north, more sun may be desirable. Protection from desiccating winter winds is necessary, especially in the north, either through proper siting, or by covering in winter with evergreen boughs, if not by snow.

Be sure to purchase species of heather that are hardy for your area. Research hardiness zones. The colder the climate in which you live, the more significant this consideration becomes.

Don't over-fertilize. Heathers prefer a rather lean diet. Slow feeding from organic matter breaking down in the soil is ideal. Mulching with pine bark or needles will help in controlling weeds, will add to the organic matter as it slowly breaks down, and will help in maintaining acidity.

As you begin to work with heather and heath, try to keep in mind that they are small shrubs very closely related to rhododendron, azaleas, mountain laurel, andromeda, and the like. Many of you have had experience with some of these plants, and if you try to duplicate for heather the conditions you have created for these others, you will probably be successful. They all need good drainage, lots of organic matter, loose airy soil, even moisture, and an acid soil. Start by insuring the drainage, and then add as many of the other ingredients as you can. With time and some success, you'll develop a great affection for these little wonders, both for their great diversity of size, foliage color, and flower color, and for their year-round interest of seasonal changes. **Happy heather growing!**

(The writer is the owner of Acorn Ridge Nursery, in Grand Isle, VT)

NEWS ON HEATHER IN SOUTH NEW JERSEY (Pat Hoffman gardens in Swedesboro, NJ)

Even though we in southern New Jersey had less than 5 inches of snow all winter, it appears that my heather garden is doing well. The heathers that I purchased at the annual meeting, last fall and thus, have only been through one winter, look good. I did cover most of my heathers lightly with pine boughs in January, because my 6 acres of land is very open, and I get quite a bit of wind where they are planted.

My heathers are planted by my front courtyard, so that I can enjoy them every day and don't have to worry if they are receiving enough water, mulch, etc. Of course, I would love to extend my heather garden and with time,

will do so.

At present I have about 20 varieties and about 45-50 plants. My favorite is *Calluna vulgaris* 'Wickwar Flame', which in spring and fall seems to change foliage color each day. We can have a few cool days and then a few hot ones and I really believe that I can see the foliage change from light red to brilliant crimson and back again. I keep these plants right along the sidewalk to my front door, so I can enjoy them.

I concur with the item in Heather Notes about the Philadelphia Flower Show this year. I was also disappointed not to see any heather as the 1966 show did include several varieties.

I'm happy to say that I am "spreading the word about heather" as a sales associate in the greenhouse of the first Home Depot store in Delaware. During the month of March, we received two shipments of non-hardy heather. One of the shipments included tags on each plant which said not to water them and to treat them as dried flowers. It also mentioned that you could spray them with hairspray to save the color of the bloom. Some customers rushed to purchase them and asked when they could plant them in the garden? I told them they couldn't as they were not hardy and we would be receiving hardy heather later in the season.

It would be best if Home Depot didn't sell these plants as many are returned by customers, when they "die" and they don't realize that they come from a warm climate and are forced into bloom by the thousands. It is really a nightmare and I have to honor Home Depot's guarantee, and at the same time tell the customer that the plant was supposed to die, as I give them their refund. It certainly does give heather a bad name in the minds of many people.

The week before Easter we received our first shipment of shrubs and these included nice pots of *Erica carnea* 'Springwood White & Pink'. The plants looked so good that even I bought 3 to see if they do as well as the others I am already growing. I continue to spread the word about heather to my customers at Home Depot and have given out information on NEHS.

I look forward to more time in my garden this year, as last year I was stricken with Lyme Disease in mid-June and could not tend my garden until late August. I am pleased that my plants continued to grow well with limited care and I recall *Calluna vulgaris* 'Peter Sparkes' blooming well through the weeds. I was on antibiotics for a month and will be more cautious this year as deer wander freely here.

I would like to know if other members have problems with deer eating heather? While I do have deer tracks by the front of my house, I have not found any heather damage, instead they eat my redbird dogwoods. If I have to lose something, I prefer the dogwoods to my heather.

We certainly thank Pat for her news and it should caution other members to watch for ticks, as they garden. I have never had deer eat any of my heather, although they munch on my hostas, Japanese maples, crab apples, old roses and even young rhododendrons. What has been your experience and what have you done about it???

A FEW COPIES OF THE OUT OF PRINT "HEATHERS IN COLOUR" by Brian & Valerie Proudley are available, 192 pgs., various editions, @\$16 a copy including postage. Checks to NEHS sent to our address.

UPDATE ON THE ANNUAL MEETING OF NEHS & NAHS - Sept. 12th - 14th on Cape Cod, MA

The response to the Annual Meeting of the NEHS and NAHS on Cape Cod, Sept. 12th to 14th has been good. There's still room for more to attend.

Reservations may be made by notifying:

**Harry Bowen
30 Chase Road
Falmouth, MA 02540**

Enclose a check (made out to NEHS) for \$25 for each person. You'll be billed the balance about 3 - 4 weeks before the meeting. At the same time a definitive program, assorted maps, and attractions on the Cape will be sent to you. The balance of the bill will be about \$65, more or less.

The featured speaker will be Peter Vickers, of Dinnington, England. He served many years as a Board Member of the British Heather Society (THS) and for many years operated his own heather nursery. He continues to work actively with THS and was chairman of their very successful committee that ran a stand at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show this past April. He also chairs the committee that is planning the annual meeting of the THS in Cumbria, this September. Peter will share his vast trove of knowledge about heather with those attending our meeting. While he will be a speaker, he will also be present for the entire program and members should feel free in speaking with him about any joys and sorrows that they may have in their own heather garden. (members may recall that Peter's picture appeared on the cover of Heather Notes a few years ago.)

Rita & David Plumridge, from Consett, Durham, England will also be in attendance. Their beautiful heather garden has been seen on BBC television. Let's make them welcome, as all of our other visitors from afar and seek to learn from one-another.

Hotel reservations must be made separately. We have a block of rooms at the:

**Quality Inn
291 Jones Road
Falmouth, MA 02540
Phone - 508-540-2000 Fax - 508-548-2712**

Rooms will be held only until AUGUST 8TH, so be **CERTAIN** to reserve before that time.

We'll see you all there!

Harry Bowen

FLOWERS of the MOORLAND

**Wild flowers of the moorland, ye are very dear to me;
Ye lure my dreaming memory as clover does the bee;
Ye bring back all my childhood loved, when freedom, joy and health
Had never thought of wearing chains to fetter**

fame and wealth.

**Wild blossoms of the common land, brave tenants of the earth,
Your breathings were among the first that helped my spirit's birth;
For how my busy brain would dream and how my heart would burn,
Where gorse and heather flung their arms above the forest fern.**

Eliza Cook

From the President

Urgent message to all members: NEHS must have six candidates who will agree to serve on our Board during the coming year.

The Board of Directors, comprised of the same few people who have carried the Society for too many years declares itself "worn out." *Without new officers and directors to carry out the business of the Society, NEHS ceases to exist after the annual meeting, September 12 to 14, 1997.*

For the first time in the Society's history, there is no Vice President - nobody to step in as President in 1998. Now, in addition to a VP, we need a Secretary, a Treasurer and three Directors who serve "at large" to represent the membership.

If you are interested in heather and can work with other people, you are fully qualified! It would be especially nice to see more women and some recent members on the Board this September. With the enthusiasm and creativity displayed in the member survey it should be easy to fill all six posts from a pool of more than 300 members.

The plain fact, however, is that the future of NEHS is up to the membership. If you want NEHS to continue, then *you* must be one of the volunteers or help us find someone else who will serve.

Your offer to serve must be received in writing on or before August 11, 1997. Specify the position that you are willing to fill, and send your letter to the chairman of the nominating committee: Virginia Ward, Floribunda Landscape Gardeners, PO Box 502, Jackson, NH 03846. Her daytime phone is (603) 383-979.

Thanks to all who volunteer.

Orlan Gaeddert

OUR THANKS FLOW TO THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WHO CAME OUT ON JUNE 18th TO HELP NEHS CLEAR THE SITE AT THE HAY ESTATE, FOR THE FUTURE "CHANEY BROKAW" MEMORIAL HEATHER GARDEN;

**Elaine Miller - NY
Jonathan Reinhardt - NH
Dick Brokaw - VT
"Bunny" van Valley - NH
Donald MacKay - NY
Walter Wornick - NH
Under the direction of Bill Noble of the garden.**

Profile of NEHS Members

The following information comes from the recent study which the Society sponsored. 258 members (74%) responded to the survey.

Our typical age is close to 60, half of us are employed, about one-fourth in the field of horticulture. We have been gardening for a long time, more than 20 years on average.

Heathers have a stronger appeal to women than to men. By a 2 to 1 margin it is the lady of the household who reports the greater interest in heather.

Our typical member has a dozen or two dozen different heath/heather cultivars. One-fourth have just a few test plants, but 10% of us have more than 100 different cultivars. Mostly we show them off in a special display bed, but many of us also have them as ground covers, companion plants, etc. Some unusual uses include brewing, dried flower arrangements and patio plants.

We have a clear consensus that heathers are showy, easy to grow, low maintenance plants. 41% of our members describe heathers as exciting plants, and 49% "highly recommend" them to other gardeners in their area. Only 1% or 2% of us report disease problems or think of heathers as "too much work for the rewards they provide."

Put that way, doesn't it sound like heather is a near perfect plant - indeed *the* plant for the future?

Last year about 40% of us participated in a local garden club or plant society group, and a similar number were members of other national plant societies. (17% belong to another heather group as well as to NEHS.)

More than 80% of us reported hanging on to old copies of *Heather Notes*. Most gave the newsletter a mildly positive rating, and many offered suggestions for improving it. No one, however, offered any form of editorial assistance.

The last section of the questionnaire asked about NEHS activities, and it is this area where our Society has been least successful. While we have many readers, we have few "doors."

Only one-third of the members have attended any of our meetings, and of those who had, many could not recall where or when they last attended.

Forty per cent made one or more suggestions as to how we could become "more important" to the membership. Yet, only a very few among us have volunteered to help carry out these grand ideas.

We have enjoyed our low key, low cost approach. As one respondent put it, "Heather is a quiet, comfort plant. So too, the Society." Poetic, and perhaps this is a position most would agree with.

The question now is, will NEHS slip off into a "comfortable" oblivion, or will six candidates step forward to serve as officers and directors for the year ahead? OG

NORTH AMERICAN HEATHER SOCIETY

The parent group of the Northeast Heather Society, NAHS was founded in Vancouver, Canada, and was originally called the Pacific Northwest Heather Society. Over the years, an east coast group of heather enthusiasts got together and became the NEHS we have today. Our roots, however, go back to North American, and we are still a chapter of that group which spans the continent and comprises five other chapters.

NAHS president Dee Daneri of California sees the unifying function of NAHS these 20 years later as more important and valuable than ever before.

"The NAHS exists to serve its chapters," Dee says. "We can only provide these services if we have

membership to sustain the NAHS." Membership benefits include the quarterly newsletter *Heather News*, affiliation with heather gardeners throughout North America, meetings, garden tours and plant sales arranged on a regional basis.

In the last three months NAHS has given our Chapter a courtesy slide show, information for a rating system, and a sizeable subsidy for our September conference speaker's fee.

We are probably unique in plant societies in that our members don't have to join the mother organization, and can merely pay \$5 to join the local chapter, period. However, we chapters are supposed to be encouraging our members to join NAHS as well.

As your chapter representative to NAHS, I think I've been remiss in getting that message out to you as local chapter members. **The message is simple:**

Join the North American Heather Society

- **HEATHER NEWS** - quarterly newsletter
- **Affiliation** with heather gardeners throughout North America
- **Meetings, garden tours, plant sales**

Membership Dues:

\$12 for one year, \$20 for two years, \$30 for three years
Add \$2/person for additional members at same address.

Memberships are based on a calendar year. Members paying dues at any time during the year will receive five issues of the official newsletter of the North American Heather Society, *HEATHER NEWS*, for that year. All dues are payable on January 1.

Make checks payable to the NAHS and mail to:

Karla Lortz, Secretary
E 502 Haskell Hill Road
Shelton, Washington 98584

Most chapters offer a regional newsletter and dues are \$5 in addition to the NAHS. Write for more information:

California North Coast Chapter
19141 Neptune, Fort Dragg, CA 95460
Cascade Heather Society
E. 502 Haskell Hill Road Shelton, WA 98584
Cowichan Valley Heather + Heather Society
1205 Copley Place, RR1
Shawnigan lake, BC VPR2W0, Canada
Heather Enthusiasts of the Redwood Empire
11 Pinecrest Drive, Fortuna, CA
Northeast Heather Society
P. O. Box 101, Alstead, NH 03602
Victoria & Vicinity Heather Society
4553 Blenkinsop Road, Victoria, BC V8N2C7

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State or Prov. _____ Code _____

Phone _____

Am't. Enclosed _____ NAHS _____ Chapter _____

Won't you consider joining NAHS? Twelve dollars couldn't be better spent to increase your knowledge and expand your circle of "heather friends."

If you are on the electronic information highway - or even if you're not, find someone who is - and look up the NAHS webpage at :

<http://www.humboldt1.com/-heathers>

The brand-new webpage is the work of NAHS vice-president Murray Turoff of New Jersey, a longtime NEHS member and computer wizard. As Dee says, "the wave of the future has come ashore," with vast amounts of information, previously obsolete before getting to the printer, now kept current with proper webpage management.

Joining North American Heather Society is both a journey back to our roots and a look forward to a world of horticultural enjoyment.

Judy Wiksten

THE LITTLE BROWN DOG WITH THE GREEN COAT

Prior issues of Heather Notes have given information about how to obtain a Plant Import License from the US Dept. of Agriculture. Coming back from London's Heathrow airport to New York's JFK the end of May, I was waiting for my baggage to appear on the carousel at the British Air Terminal. I had my one bag of hand luggage on a cart and it contained a plastic bag with about 15 plants that I had declared on my Customs Declaration. I had carefully washed the soil off the roots of each plant and placed it in a separate plastic bag.

Then along came a woman in uniform with a little brown dog on a leash. The dog wore a green coat with the words "U.S. Department of Agriculture" on it. As it sniffed along the carts it came over to my cart and stopped. It's keeper immediately asked me "if I had any bread." Tired and watching for my other luggage, I responded that I did not. Then she asked "if I had any fruit" and again I responded in the negative. However, by that time I got the *gestalt* and responded that I did have some plants, "which I had declared on my Customs Declaration. She asked to see it and wrote on it that I should go to Agricultural Inspection when I got the rest of my baggage and "he CLAIMS TO HAVE A PLANT IMPORT PERMIT."

When I collected the rest of my bags I was sent to the Agriculture Inspectors and there were 9 standing at the booth. I guess they had increased the staff, since the dog was on duty. However, I was the only one to be inspected. They all gathered round and I showed them my plants and then took out my permit. This impressed them no end and it was in a new and revised format, as I had just had it renewed. I was immediately treated with more respect and they agreed that they could not deal with the matter and had to send for a supervisor, so that made 10 people looking at my plants.

The supervisor was also very impressed by the fact that I had declared the plants and had a permit. He asked me to show the group a few of the ferns I had with me, as some of them had just taken a course on ferns that week. My plants were declared clean and everything was in order, so I was passed on, with thanks and no problem.

There is no problem bringing plants into the USA from abroad, but you must declare them and have a permit and enter through a port where there is Agricultural Inspection. Otherwise the little brown dog

with the green coat may get you and it becomes a very serious offense.

Walter

NEHS WAS THERE - wkw

On June 7th I attended an activity of the Mass. Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, Portsmouth, RI. I had joined that group, at a weak moment, after we had a combined meeting with them last fall, at which Kate Herrick spoke and they had a great collation.

Before going to England, I had received a notice from them offering rooted cuttings of rhododendrons and asking members to list their choice of 20 out of some 350 varieties. I sent in my list and they were to be picked up on June 7th.

Despite the fact that I had just returned from overseas and was going to New York state the next day, I drove for over 3 hours to Plane View Nursery, where the society uses space to root cuttings of rhododendrons. I arrived at the proper time and was told that my order had not been filled and I must wait until 11AM and then pick from among what was left...

Needless to say, I was overjoyed. However, I saw some people with heather and noticed heathers in some of the hoop-houses. I introduced myself to the owner, Mike Medeiros and he said "I know you Walter, I belong to NEHS."

He has a good quantity of interesting varieties of heather, in two sizes. The small pots are sold for \$1.50, which is hard to beat. He has a laboratory and does tissue culture of Rhododendrons and Kalmias, etc. and also propagates some heathers, which he often obtains along with rhododendrons from as far afield as Canada-

I purchased *Calluna vulgaris* "Red Pimpernel", "Hans Green", "Japanese White", "Bayport", "Autumn Glow", & "Naturepark".

The Plane View Nursery is just off RI Route 138 on Aquidneck Island. From the north and east turn left onto Braman's Lane, off Route 138, (there is a Locksmith on the corner) just south of the State Police Building (there is a town police bldg. prior to this, so don't get confused) Go to the end of Braman's Lane and turn right on Wapping Road for about one-half mile. Turn left down a dirt lane when you reach the Plane View Nursery sign.

There was a small heather mail-order business run out of the nursery, but its status is unclear at the moment. A good stop on the way down is Blithwold Mansion and Gardens in Bristol. Members of the Arnold Arboretum get free admission. We once had a Board meeting of NEHS there and it is a great place.

NEHS WAS THERE ALSO - wkw

The British Heather Society (BHS) had a stand at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show in Yorkshire, for 3 days the end of April and I assisted them a bit at the stand.

I was introduced to one of their newer members, as "a member of NEHS, from America." His response was, "I have always wanted to meet someone from NEHS, as we visited New England last fall and visited Berkshire Botanic Garden, in Stockbridge, MA, while there. We saw the NEHS heather garden and were interested knowing more about it and the organization that planted it." Needless to say, I shared information with this fine fellow, but was amazed that NEHS meant something to a person, in Britain, whom I had never met before.

NEWS FROM LES STARK - Brewster, MA

Last year Les reported "how colorful their heather was, with the snow gently sprinkling over it like powdered sugar on the top of a chocolate cake."

This year, in the same location, Mother Nature's timetable was such that they got the daffodils blooming at the same time as the *Ericas* and then Mother Nature, in addition gave them an April Fool's joke by dumping on them with a big load of snow. Report: "all survived and in my opinion the scene was even more beautiful than last year's." A sample of that beauty, a dozen clumps and spreading, was enclosed with the note.

Les goes on to say that, "I am on a medically forced regimen of having to walk a great deal, so this takes me around the by-ways of Brewster. I do believe, without any mathematical certainty, that more people are planting heathers down here on this part of the Cape. Apropos of this, I understand that our church, Christ Church Episcopal, in Harwich Port, has just completed some landscaping using heathers from Kate Herrick's Rock Spray Nursery, where our plants also originally came from.

Les also praised the article on "Heather Hints For Spring" in the last issue. (Please keep those reports on your garden and sightings on your walks coming).

FROM THE EDITOR

My trip to England went well and I enjoyed the Harragate Spring Flower Show in Yorkshire, the Malvern Flower Show in the Midlands and the Chelsea Flower Show. I also saw many friends and gardens.

I especially enjoyed my visit to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum, near Romsey in Hampshire. The garden consists of 166 acres and in the spring the Brewery Woodland is open and contains magnificent blooming azaleas and rhododendrons.

This past winter the heather garden, which had succumbed to the summer temperatures and drought of '96, was completely refurbished. The soil's water retention was improved and irrigation for the beds was provided. The plants used were selected from either the RHS Award of Garden Merit Scheme, or those recommended by the Heather Society (THS). 85 different cultivars were used in the heather garden, comprising 13 different species and hybrids. It looks great and the arboretum also serves good soup.

The heather garden at the RHS garden at Wisley, Surrey also suffered from last summer's drought, but the older beds are being improved and the two new beds look well and contain many new, interesting cultivars. We are indeed fortunate to have Andy Collins as head gardener of this collection, with his vast knowledge of heather. If only something could be done about the encroachment of trees in the area and the continued planting of birches in and around the garden. It is now impossible to pass on some of the paths in the heather beds, because of these trees.

I also enjoyed my trip to the Westonbirt Arboretum, in Gloucestershire, said to be the finest in Britain. The Silkwood area is carpeted with primroses, wood anemones and bluebells. A wonderful sight to behold and homemade bread at their concession stand.

Perhaps one of the finest heather gardens in Britain and one that I had not been to before is Champs Hill, in Coldwaltham, West Sussex the private garden of the Bowerman family. It is only open a few days during the

growing season, but I called 0798-831868 and was invited to visit the garden. It consists of some 27 acres, high on a hilltop, with magnificent views of the distant hills. It contains everything one might wish for in a garden, the trickle of water, statuary, a view, and of course, heather. 5 new cultivars of heather were found at the garden and named.

800 trees were said to have been lost in the hurricane of '87 and this opened up more space to plant rhododendrons and heather. This is a wonderful garden to visit and the drive south from the London area is truly beautiful.

I was sorry to have missed the Spring meeting at Molly Evans, as the original date was changed. I am sorry that no one sent in info. or pictures on it so our report on it will be delayed.

I will be going to the very interesting country of Bulgaria again the end of August and will then attend the annual meeting of (THS) in Cumhria, so will not be able to get back in time for the NEHS annual meeting. I hope that some of the 50 some people booked will write about it for Heather Notes and send in some pictures. Remember, there is always the topic of stray dogs in Bulgaria. See you on July 13th at our meeting at the Hay Estate.

Walter

THIS AND THAT

Our members Don & Lela Avery of Cady's Falls Nursery, Morrisville, VT - 802-888-5559, list 4 *Callunas* in their 97 catalogue supplement and probably have more at the nursery.

The Bracken fern or Brake (*Pteridium aquilinum*), scourge of the heather moorlands has been found to be carcinogenic. If you have it in your garden, as I do, be careful pulling it out. The spores are the problem so don't let them come in contact with your skin when you pull them out. The ferns, with spores, are said to be able to be composted, with no ill effect.

Shane Smilie, our member in Palmerston, New Zealand wrote that it is difficult to obtain many new cultivars of heather in N.Z. He recently acquired from an old collector, *Erica cinerea* 'Eden Valley', *Erica carnea* 'Cecilia M. Beale', and *Erica tetralix* 'Pink Star'. A few new cultivars are coming in from overseas, like *Calluna vulgaris* 'Red Favorite'. He was really taken by it's intense red color. A few new cultivars of *Erica carnea* have been developed in N.Z. and he will report more about them when he is able to obtain them and grow them on.

Shane says the reports about weather in Heather News remind him of their upcoming winter season (seasons are reversed), but winters there are not as severe as in New England. They have had a poor summer with only two days above 75 degrees F.

HEATHER NOTES is published four times a year by the Northeast Heather Society - P.O.Box 101 - Highland

View, Alstead, NH 03602-0101 USA. Dues of \$5.00 a year and materials for publication should be sent to the above address.

PRESIDENT: Orlan Gacddert, Canaan, NY; SEC./TREAS.: Walter Wornick, Alstead, NH
BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Harry Bowen, Falmouth, MA; Will Clark, N. Falmouth, MA; Alfred Storer, Brookside, NJ, Judith Wiksten, Middleboro, MA

EDITOR: Walter K. Wornick

NORTHEAST HEATHER SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 101 - HIGHLAND VIEW
ALSTEAD, NH 03602-0101 USA
"Brighten the World With Heather"
ISSN 1086-8925



ERICA CILIARIS

FIRST CLASS MAIL
DO NOT DELAY!

THIS AND THAT cont.

Elaine Miller, Central Islip, NY writes that her heathers came through their mild winter on Long Island exceedingly well.

Nancy Marshall, Longmeadow, MA wrote in April that she was squeamish about pruning her heathers, because they are small, but she has no trouble pruning shrubs and bushes and trees. She thinks that she had more winter kill this year than ever, at least that is what it looked like when she could see her plants. Her winter kill seems to become evident in March. The plants looked good in January & February, some of them blooming then, but became brown in March. She always leaves the fall leaves around her heathers, but doesn't cover them. Her heathers are in a sunny south facing exposed spot, which, so far, they have seemed to like.

(Let us hear how your heathers finally made out? I thought I had lost my prostrate Callunas, like 'White Lawn', as they were all brown when I left for England the later part of April. However, on my return, I found they had all greened up.)

Three members of NEHS will be attending the annual meeting of the British Heather Society (THS) in Cumbria, England in September. Judy Wiksten, Walter Wornick and Ella May Wulff.

Gail Taylor, St. George, New Brunswick, Canada wrote the end of March that they had had a rather mild winter with the usual freeze-thaw. They had more snow in March than they did all winter. She can't wait until the snow and ice melt so she can give us a report on her heathers.

We welcome to membership in NEHS, Dr. Mark C. Starrett, Asst. Professor of Horticulture at the University of Vermont. He has a research project and will be working with propagation and hardiness of *Calluna*, some species of *Erica* and *Arctostaphylos*. He hopes to eventually establish trial gardens at the University of VT Horticultural Farm, which is in USDA Zone 4.

(We hope that you will join with us at some of our meetings and let us know how we might be of help to you with your project.)

And finally, what's RIGHT with NEHS. We hear so much Doom & Gloom...

Over 350 copies of this Newsletter are being sent out all over the world.

We now have members paid up beyond the year 2,000.

Major horticultural libraries subscribe. Then there are the good folk like you and I