



NEHS Heritage (How We Began)

By Greta Waterman

In This Issue

NEHS Heritage.....pg 1
 Feature Plant.....pg 2
 Heathers at Heritage.....pg 2
 Harry's Birthday.....pg 2
 Officers/Directors Listing.....pg 3
 Heather Bits.....pg 3
 Coming Events.....pg 4
 A Strange Winter.....pg 5
 From the President.....pg 5
 Robin Dustin.....pg 6
 Picture Page.....pg 7
 About Heather Notes.....pg 8
 INSERT.....Membership List

The idea is planted! Joyce Descloux called me in the summer of 1985 while she was vacationing in Maine. I don't remember how she got my name! She was very interested in starting up a heath and heather group comprised of enthusiastic heather growers in the northeast. We met for lunch and decided that we would give it a try. I contacted Dick Munson who was recently appointed Director of the Botanic Garden at Smith College. I had met Dick at Cornell University where he obtained his doctorate on the growing of heaths and heathers in Upstate New York. Dick was very interested in supporting us and it was decided to hold an informational meeting at Smith College on October 19, 1985. Smith College had approximately one hundred cultivars of *Bruckenthalia*, *Calluna*, *Erica* and *Phyllodoce*.

I contacted Marjorie Walsh, owner of Daystar Nursery, Litchfield, Me. She was an old-time propagator of heaths and heathers and had quite a following of mail-order customers. She gave me a contact list and we came up with a list of possible people for our first meeting.

It was quite an exciting day for Dick, Joyce and me. I wish I could remember the names of all the people there! I remember: Marjorie and George Walsh, Edna and "Mac" MacKinnon, Walter Wornick, Marilyn Shirley, Susan Kierstead and Andy Wheeler. If I forgot you, please forgive me for my lack of memory! Boy, were they excited and eager to share their knowledge and experiences and to finally meet others who had a great love of heathers. After coffee and much chatting, I presented a slide show "Calluna Cultivars for Maine Gardening". Following lunch, Andy Wheeler, heather grower for Sylvan Nurseries, South Westport, MA conducted a hands-on workshop on heather propagation techniques. Dick led us on a tour of the Botanic Garden at Smith College. The first informational meeting was a huge success!

There was not a lack of places to see heathers so much time was spent making a list of nurseries, public gardens and private homes. It was decided that our next meeting would be at Sylvan Nurseries, January 1986 and Andy Wheeler would again conduct a propagation workshop of heaths and heathers.

The spring meeting was held on Cape Cod at Waquoit Heather Nursery owned by Edna and "Mac" MacKinnon. "Mac" and Edna had many incredible greenhouses just filled with baby heaths and heathers. Everyone had a great time picking out new varieties to try in their gardens.

The first annual meeting of the Eastern Chapter of the North American Heather Society was held in Freeport, Maine in August, 1986. Mrs. L. M. C. Smith of Wolfs Neck Farm hosted the meeting. This was also the Annual meeting of the North American Heather Society so we had some west coast members attend. The Steering Committee had come up with a slate of officers and they were enthusiastically elected: Dick Munson, President; Greta Waterman, Vice-President; Walter Wornick, Secretary/Treasurer; Directors—Joyce Descloux, Al Daggart, and George MacKinnon. Joyce was the editor for the early newsletters. She had a journalist background and really did an excellent job in organizing our small newsletters.

All of the meetings that first year were well-attended with at least 20-30 members at each meeting. Our membership by June, 1986 totaled 55 (members were from Massachusetts, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, North Carolina., Canada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and Maine)

COMING NEXT ISSUE
'Why We Name Heather'
 by Charles Nelson

CALENDAR

AT A GLANCE

AUG 6-8

2010 NAHS Annual Meeting and Conference Fort Bragg, California

SEPTEMBER 11-12

2010 Northeast Heather Society Annual Membership Meeting and Conference Lasdon Park Arboretum Katonah, NY

June 2012

International Conference in Spain



"Harry Bowen, NEHS Director Emeritus, turned 88 on May 28th! His Master Gardener friends arranged a surprise party and from the expression on his face they succeeded.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARRY
 from your friends in the NEHS"

Heathers at Heritage Plantation Sandwich, MA

We have an eye witness report on Heathers at the Heritage Plantation in Sandwich, Massachusetts. Unfortunately the report is over a year old having fallen through the cracks because you cannot always fit "everything" into the limited space of an 8 page newsletter. At the time of the report, May 2009, the report was very encouraging on the conditions of several Calluna and Erica growing there. An internet search on Heritage Plantation reveals little garden information.

Are there any interested NEHS members in the Sandwich, MA area willing to observe and report on the heathers at the Heritage Plantation?? At the NEHS Conference, on the Cap in 2006, it was reported that the heather at the Heritage Plantation was in poor shape and it was recommended that the garden be taken off the list of NEHS Heather Gardens to Visit. It would be heartening to see a revival of New England Heather gardens. And.... if anyone can make this valiant effort to report on the situation would you also take some digital photos.

FEATURED PLANT

Vaccinium macrocarpon "Cranberry"

Contrary to popular opinion this cranberry does not like boggy conditions. It likes a 50/50 mixture of peat moss and coarse sand and a high acidity level in the soil. Sounds just like the optimal soil conditions for heathers. They have runners from which the plant spreads and is easily propagated and the foliage which is evergreen will turn dark red with the fall frost. As you can see from the picture their upright growing habit looks like an *Erica carnea* but this plant will produce marble size, bright red fruit from each pale pink flower. Last year's harvest from 2 year old plants gave me the cranberry sauce for the Thanksgiving Turkey and this year it looks like I'll be able to share the bounty.



Vaccinium macrocarpon "Cranberry"

Heaths & Heathers • Rare Conifers
 Japanese Maples • Perennials
 Unusual Trees & Shrubs
 Alpines & Xeric • Bamboo • Ferns
 Grasses
 Hosta • Bog & Water



QUACKIN' GRASS NURSERY

When the ordinary is unacceptable
 Thursday through Monday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 Closed Tuesday and Wednesday
 860 779 1732
 16 Laurel Hill Road, Brooklyn, CT 06234
 www.QuackinGrassNursery.com

Heather Bits

Winter Mulch

As promised I am reporting on the results of using *Miscanthus sinensis* for a winter mulch on the heathers. As of this date there are no *Miscanthus* volunteers growing in the heather bed.

Winter Moisture

I've seen at least 7 different heather beds this spring as they emerged from a very unusual winter. An assortment of coverings had been used, from none to solid plastic. My uneducated observation is this: Where the soil around the heathers maintained a sufficient moisture level there was a far greater survival rate. In several cases it was 100%.

NEHS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President/ Content Editor	Mary Matwey	7 Heights Court Binghamton, NY 13905	(607) 723 1418	mmatwey@stny.rr.com
Vice-President	Bill Dowley	28 Hurricane Road Keene, NH 03431	(603) 355 8801	wdowley@ne.rr.com
Treasurer/ Corres Sec.	Peter Matwey	7 Heights Court Binghamton, NY 13905	(607) 723 1418	pmatwey@stny.rr.com
Recording Secretary	Suzanne Barnes	9 Giles St. Binghamton, NY 13905	(607) 770 9414	scbee9@aol.com
Director Emeritus	Harry Bowen	18 Chase Road, Apt. A Falmouth, MA 02540	(508) 548 3113	JPNautilus@aol.com
Director	Pat Hoffman	PO Box 305 Swedesboro, NJ 08085	(856) 467 4711	njgardener15@hotmail.com
Director	Ellen Holland	69 Hope Corson Rd Seaville, NJ 08230	(609) 390 9143	ehheather@hotmail.com
Director	Vivagean Merz	55 Upland Drive Falmouth, MA 02540	(508) 548 3282	vivagean@comcast.net
Director	Paul Murphy	2473 Hickory Hill Road Oxford, PA 19363	(302) 559 6052	murphy613@zoominternet.net
Director	Alice Schaefer	27 Waverly Avenue Newton, MA 02458	(617) 965 0546	puppetiris@aol.com
Director	Priscilla Williams	35 Turner Road Townsend, MA 01469	(978) 597 3005	phw@seedlingspecialist.com
Director	Donald Mackay	135 Deerfield Lane Pleasantville, NY 10570	(914) 769 6553	dammackay@gmail.com
Director	Bunny van Valey	108 Mossman Road Sudbury, MA 01776	(978) 443 6454	bhvv@msn.com
Director/ Publishing Editor	Jane Murphy	2473 Hickory Hill Road Oxford, PA 19363	(610) 883 2171	Murphy1213@zoominternet.net

DON'T BE PRUNED! WE WOULD MISS YOU!

Check the expiration date on the address page of this newsletter.
 Send your renewal to Treasurer Peter Matwey, 7 Heights Court, Binghamton, NY 13905

A Strange Winter

by Donald A.M. Mackay

No matter your position on Global Warming or Climate Change, you must admit this has been an unusual winter. Two monster snowstorms clobbered Washington and Baltimore and much of southern New Jersey but barely reached New York City or the Westchester suburbs. In January Burlington on Lake Champlain VT (altitude 100') got a record 36 inches of snowfall, yet the ski areas to the east and 3000' high got only an inch or so. Later in February the ski areas got 33 inches of heavy wet snow while areas to the south got mostly rain. Two days later a separate storm came up the coast and dropped over 18 inches of very heavy wet snow in Westchester and the Hudson Valley. Then another storm came up the coast, dropped 4 to 6 inches of rain, mostly in New Jersey, and 70mph wind gusts toppled huge trees on the sodden ground.

These events I can attest to personally. I was trapped in Washington DC with 22 inches of snow and might still be there if some neighbors and I hadn't shoveled the side road to get to a road that had at least seen a snow plow.

In Vermont I had to shovel 30 inches of snow off the roof and driveway just in time to get to Westchester two days after the coastal storm had wreaked enormous damage to trees and utilities. Both power and phone lines lay on the ground and nothing was so overwhelming as the tangle of fallen trees and broken branches that littered my garden and the entire area. Luckily the wind and rain storm did little damage. The heavy snow had already done that.

Needless to say, the pine branches I had added to the heather beds early last December proved superfluous being buried under several feet of accumulated snow. Vermont had already received in February twice its normal snowfall for the year and much of New England must be able to make similar claims. This must certainly be an excellent year for snow cover.

I was therefore surprised to hear from Art Pilch in Silva, NC that the winter had already proved disastrous for his heathers. The southern coastal storms that had brought snow from Virginia to Maine had produced very heavy rains but only a modicum of wet snow insufficient to cover his heathers. What he did get was days of persistent wind after a heavy freeze that brought rapid browning to his plants. He is already quite sure many of his heathers, especially the winter-coloring callunas are goners.

Did he use any protective cover? "Of course not," was the answer. He wants to see the beautiful winter colors. Hard to argue with that reasoning, which has worked so well for him for many years.

The conditions were also unkind to his dwarf conifers, another of his specialties. He has promised to write up a detailed history of his losses, but it is already clear that this is not just a case of loss among the tender plants. Some heathers that have proved ironclad for the past years look like they have failed to survive this winter.

Is there a moral to this story? Heather beds carefully covered with evergreen boughs are unnecessarily buried under two to four feet of snow in New England, while unprotected beds are ravished by a lack of snow in what should be reliably wintry country almost 3000' up in the Great Smokies.

Yes, our climate certainly seems to be changing, one way or the other, for some reason not yet clear to mere mortals.

From The President

Hello Everyone,

I've had the great pleasure to meet or correspond with 6 (new to me) heather enthusiasts so far this year. Two will soon become new members of the Society, two are long time members who have made physical contact with us and two requested heather information, one of which became a member. Can it be the magnetic, flamboyant image of our society, its officers and the events we sponsor? Ah..... don't think so. I think it is because, in keeping with our mission statement, your society and its officers/members are always willing to share heather information and support. The year-round beauty of the heather is the first attraction but we all know that being successful at growing heather requires know-how.

At the April board meeting in NYC, your society discussed creating a website which will be a great tool for sharing heather information to a lot more people and the "Heather Growing Guide" for the Northeast is proceeding on its way to publication. Another educational opportunity was a Heather presentation given by Donald Mackay to the Federated Garden Clubs of New York at Lasdon Park Arboretum, in Katonah, NY. Donald's talk was part of a 3 day course offered to Horticulture Judges and Exhibitors although the general public was also invited. His presentation covered the Natural History of Calluna and Erica, the growing culture needed for successful gardening of heathers, pruning, winterizing and companion plants. The presentation included plant and flower samples and a short field trip to the Lasdon Heather Bed. All the effort was proved worthwhile when one participant commented "I've always heard about heathers but never really knew much about them. Now that I do, I'll give them a try."

I was present at Donald's presentation to show slides of beautiful heather plants and beds as a backdrop to his talk. I also used this visit to firm up our plans for the NEHS Annual Meeting/Conference to be held at Lasdon Park Arboretum in Katonah, NY on September 11-12. The main event of the Conference is an old fashion, hands-on "Heather Propagation Workshop". See the event description and schedule (page 4) and make plans to join us for the workshop and Annual Meeting. A slate of officers for the 2010-2011 or 2010-2012 terms has been selected and will be voted on at the Annual Meeting. On Sunday, September 12, we will take advantage of The Garden Conservancy's OPEN DAYS where we will have the opportunity to visit two private gardens. I hope to see you there.

Regards,

Mary Matwey

Hope you enjoy the new features: Life With/After Heathers and NEHS Heritage 1986 (How We Began)

Life With/After Heathers: Robin Dustin's Current Obsession (NEHS Board Member 2004-2006)

Robin's undergraduate years at Southern Illinois Univ. were filled with studying every art or craft class they offered - weaving, pottery, jewelry, print making, welding & oil painting. That was followed by a summer at Penland School of Crafts in NC, doing more weaving and taking classes in lapidary (stone cutting) & enameling. Two more years of weaving, jewelry metal smithing and fabric design at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan where she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree with a major in weaving and a minor in metal. Needless to say, after all that education, she was pretty well equipped for taking up working on a wood lathe in my retirement.

But let's fill in the years between then and now. Starting in the 70s, with ten dollars in the bank and wanting to see what she could do with her own two hands, Robin moved to NYC and combined forces with a friend and did carpentry work as a partner in the "Gorilla Girls" and was very successful at problem solving with tape measure, saw, hammer and nails for about six years. Giving in to the call of her roots, she decided to move to Sandwich, NH, the town in which her mother was born and which she had known on and off all her life. Here, she was determined not to do carpentry work, but make an effort to earn a living at her MFA major - weaving. She set up a shop with a friend who did marvelous jewelry and started weaving only to find out that she didn't care a thing about weaving. She hired on as a member of a construction crew and built houses, including post and beam work; replaced rotten timbers; renovated homes; climbed all over roofs; learned finish work and constructed her own house during the 80s. In the early 90s she worked with a friend running a craft school in Moultonboro, NH in a two-room school house. But the 90s' recession proved to be a difficult time to fill classes with people who wanted to learn how to do things with their hands, but couldn't afford even their basic fees.

After that Robin served for 10 years as the director/curator of the Sandwich Historical Society and quickly learned about running a non-profit and the importance of cataloging contents of the museum, getting the info into a computer program, assigning and training staff members in a specific job and responsibilities and of course, fund raising.

Finally after the completion of building her house in the mid 90s she started buying plants. At first, many rhododendrons to give a green area at the edge of her pine forest and then she graduated to heathers after finding out about them through the Northeast Heather Society. At first she bought fifteen plants and located them in her front yard (good south exposure) on a mound of dirt created by an old hemlock stump. Over the years they've done quite well and she even propagated several of the original purchase. Robin has since added to the Calluna/Erica collection in various other areas of her gardens and basically, living this far north is not a problem for these plants, as long as they get good southern exposure and a heaping of snow over them in the winter.

Back to her latest obsession, wood turning. In late 2006 Robin found herself attending monthly woodturning club meetings at Kennett High School in Conway and finally borrowed a friend's truck and walked out of the Woodcraft Supply in Portsmouth with a Delta 1440 (can turn 14" diameter and 40" long) wood working lathe. She upgraded to a hefty Powermatic which she lovingly calls "Puff, the Magic Powermatic Dragon" and with 50 acres of New England forest to harvest, her retirement is more than filled with the struggle of dividing her time between gardening in nice weather and working in her basement shop during inclement weather. Everyone should have this 'struggle.'

She says "I pick up a piece of wood, mount it on the lathe and turn whatever comes out of it. The wood and I work together, making decisions about size, final shape, design treatments and finishes. Because I appreciate heaths and heathers, I try to provide a good, nurturing environment for them and similarly, because I like wood so much, I try to honor each piece I'm working with, be it left-over scraps from a carpentry shop, a freshly cut log or one that was formerly a piece of fire wood." Robin wishes everyone could have such a busy and rewarding retirement.

See examples of Robin's Woodworking on the adjacent page (page 7).

Anyone interested in contacting Robin personally for more information on her craft, please write or email the editor of the Heather Notes.

EXAMPLES OF ROBIN DUSTIN'S WOODWORKING SKILL



NEHS VOLUNTEERS HARD AT WORK !

Renovating a Heather Bed at Cutler Botanic Garden



Fort Tryon Heather Trimming



Lots of help at The Fells Trimming



HEATHER NOTES, all rights reserved, is published quarterly by the Northeast Heather Society (NEHS), a tax-exempt organization and a chapter of the North American Heather Society (NAHS).

The purpose of the Northeast Heather Society is to foster interest in growing heathers (*Calluna, Erica, Daboecia, Cassiope, Phylloce* and *Andromeda*) in northeastern North America, by serving as a conduit of educational information for both the experienced and the novice gardener.

MEMBERSHIP in the Northeast Heather Society is open to anyone who pays dues to this chapter. Membership benefits include: a subscription to this quarterly newsletter, participation in chapter meetings and elections, borrowing privileges for slide/power point presentations, and, most valuable of all, contact with fellow heather gardeners who mostly live in or near your growing zone, all willing to share helpful advice and their experiences. A family membership permits more than one family member to vote and participate in all NEHS activities for an additional \$5 per year fee above the annual dues. The family membership includes all household members residing at the same address and each member has one vote. Each household will receive only one copy of Heather Notes.

Dues for an Individual: \$15 a year; \$28 for a two year membership; \$40 for a three year membership

Dues for a Family \$20 a year; \$33 for a two year membership; \$45 for a three year membership

Remit payment to: Peter Matwey, Treasurer, 7 Heights Court, Binghamton, NY 13905

HEATHER CULTURE PROGRAMS are available. For slides, contact: Harry Bowen, Falmouth, MA. Tel (508) 548 3113.

For digital presentations, contact Bill Dowley, Keene, NH. Tel. (603) 355-8801; wdowley@ne.rr.com

WEB INFORMATION: North American Heather Society website: www.northamericanheathersoc.org

Click on 'Chapters' to find the Northeast Heather Society (NEHS) chapter page.

ADVERTISING: Quarter page ad: \$35 per issue; \$25 per issue if advertising in two or more consecutive issues.

Contact: Pat Hoffman (856) 467-4711; njgardener15@hotmail.com

BE A CONTRIBUTOR TO HEATHER NOTES:

Do you have a suggestion, a question, a story, an anecdote, a poem, or a photo to share? Contact the Content editor:

Mary Matwey, 7 Heights Court, Binghamton, NY 13905 (607) 723 1418 mmatwey@stny.rr.com

All material may be edited for clarity and length.

DEADLINES FOR EACH ISSUE:

March 20—June 20—September 20—December 20

