



The Name Game ...Whether your passion is heather, perennials, annuals, trees or shrubs or a combination of all, knowing botanical names is very important. Even Alice in Wonderland thinks so.....

The Name of the Heather: A Fairy-Story for Gardeners

by Lewis Carroll

(with the assistance of Charles Nelson)

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It was a peaceful day in Looking-glass Land. The Aged, Aged Man was enjoying the sunshine as he looked for haddock's eyes in the Heather Garden - *why* he was engaged in this particular pursuit only he knows! Greenfingers the Nurseryman was carefully taking cuttings of St Ceobad's heath and putting them in upside-down so they would produce nice new roots. And Alice, who had recently arrived, was having a deep and meaningful conversation with The Gnat.

"I don't *rejoice* in insects at all," Alice explained, "because I'm rather afraid of them ... But I can tell you the names of some of them."

"Of course they answer to their names?" The Gnat remarked carelessly.

"I never knew them do it."

"What's the use of their having names," The Gnat said, "if they won't answer to them?"

"No use to *them*," said Alice; "but it's useful to the people that name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all." ...

The Gnat was silent for a while, then sighed deeply, letting two large tears roll down his cheeks - he was thinking of all the poor garden flowers he had seen which had no names at all because their gardeners had forgotten to label them.

Cheering up, The Gnat took Alice under his wing and they set off for afternoon tea with Rocking-horse-fly, Bread-and-butterfly, and Snap-dragon-fly.

"What's the point of this nonsense?" asked The Bewildered Gardener, who was happily reading *Detartsulli snedrag*, the gardening magazine published in Looking-glass Land, and otherwise minding his own business in The Red Queen's garden.

"Names - names of garden plants!", exclaimed Alice; "we need names for all the lovely garden plants so we can order them from Greenfingers the Nurseryman down in Tiger-lily Cottage. And, if we don't have the right name, we won't get the right plants for our white border, or our purple border, or our ... our ... what're they called .. I remember - island beds with dwarf conifers as focal points! That'll make the old queen very angry."

And, like every good fairy tale, when Alice and The Bewildered Gardener discovered how easy it was to learn names, even Latin ones, and how to make up nice new names, they were happy ever after! ... But we've jumped ahead

To be continued, next issue of Heather Notes : January, 2011

From: Mario A. Abreu, NAHS/MCHS President

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"I was hoping that the 2nd VP would be filled by one of the NorthEast Heather Society members. Please encourage one of your chapter members to be a representing NAHS Board Officer (2nd VP) for 2011-2012."

Welcome New Members

Terry Noxel,

Windsor, NY

Barbara Whiteside Ohliger,

Newark, Delaware

2011 Northeast Heather Society Annual Meeting/Conference August 26, 27, 28

Where: Binghamton NY

Events: ♦ Aug. 26, Friday Night Mixer with Heather Parlor Show
♦ Aug. 27, Saturday, Breakfast, Lunch, and Heather Garden Tours
Dinner with Speaker and Gourd Craft Workshop
♦ Aug. 28, Sunday Brunch at the home of Pete and Mary Matwey

Accommodations: Fairfield Inn, Comfort Inn, Motel 6... take your pick

Meals : Mixer and Breakfast at local restaurant, Box lunches, catered dinner at Town of Chenango Community Center, Brunch at home of Matweys'

Speaker: Terry Noxel

Terry has held various positions in both the Pa and American Gourd Societies and is the current President of the PA Gourd Soc. and Treasurer for the American Gourd Soc.. She has been the chairperson for the PA Gourd Festival for 4 years and now that she has retired and moved to New York , Terry has become a Master Gardener Intern with the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Binghamton, NY and is spreading the "Gourd Glow" in the NY area.

FEATURED PLANT *Calluna vulgaris* 'Pennyacre Lemon'

This was a rescued plant from a heap of discarded heathers. It is just 4" x 4" but has tripled in size with a little TLC and I hope to see it rival 'Gold Haze' for the winter Heather garden showcase in a few years.

- White flowers, Aug.- Sep
- Lemon yellow foliage throughout the year
- Broad, upright habit
- Height 18" Spread 24"
- Found in Fife, Scotland



FAREWELL

Milt Mertz of Falmouth, MA passed away in May 2010

Ann C Wheeler of Dartmouth, MA , a long time supporter of NEHS ,recently passed away. Ann worked for Sylvan Nursery in Westport, MA for nearly thirty years and specialized in Heaths and Heathers.

STEP-UP New Englanders !

Be an NEHS volunteer/
representative
at the Heritage Museum and
Gardens Heather Bed

For more info see the president's column on page 6

Heaths & Heathers • Rare Conifers
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Heather Bits

Did you know that if your yellowish Calluna or Erica blooms with pink, lavender or rose colored flowers it will take on a reddish or orange color with the coming of winter. Only the white flowering yellowish heather will stay yellow all year round.

Don't play the odds. Count on protecting your heathers for the winter and start preparing NOW.

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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 Report on Lasdon Park, Somers, N.Y.

by Donald Mackay

Given the date chosen, the traveling distances involved, it was perhaps inevitable that the pre-registration figures forced a cancellation of our meeting planned for Lasdon Park in northern Westchester and recourse to a mail ballot for election of officers. It was also unfortunate in that the many people involved last year in planning and planting the heather garden there did not get to see the result of their labors.

After a slow start, a bad winter and a site short of afternoon light, meaning heavy shade after 1 or 2pm, the heather garden there is now a joy to behold. In spite of the extreme drought and record heat of this summer, all the heathers that entered the summer have lived - and prospered - throughout it.

There were some losses and slow starts, but these all seemed attributable to the variable weather of the winter and - dare I say it - less than perfect planting techniques used in the first place. Frost heaving was fairly common with the smaller plants suffering more than larger ones with their larger root balls and moisture reserves. Nearly all plants required heavy foot pressure at some point to get them set well into the ground, and two or three heavy mulchings to mitigate the effect of frost and keep weeds - mostly spring bulb seedlings - at bay.

The Lasdon Park staff have kept a fond eye on the heathers, watering them with sprinklers set in the nearby lawn, and provided fancy labels for all the plants. Alas, the frosts proved more destructive to some labels than the heather they described, and have introduced an element of uncertainty.

Loss of a few heathers over the winter and insertion of new plants have exacerbated the identity problem, which becomes obvious when a plant labeled 'J.H. Hamilton' - lovely as it is right now - develops long spires of single dark lavender flowers adorning the wrong colored foliage. A map was made at the time of planting but now needs careful checking since large paving stones had to be moved to get at weeds, or provide more room for heather growth. The best example of growth - a heather now over two feet tall and wide and magnificent in its heavy bloom - is sited where the map shows a large rock; it awaits identification for now.

The plants that were lost were more certainly known. All three plantings of the bud bloomer 'Alexandra' were lost, two of three 'Glenfiddich', and surprisingly all the 'Kramer's Rote' - usually a very winter-resistant *Erica x darleyensis*. A plant labeled 'Martha Hermann' looked very good causing me some grief as I had to admit it was doing far better than my own - which are loath to flower. However, the profuse flowering of the Lasdon plant, which now seems to be the wrong color on the wrong foliage, makes me feel a lot better.

A plant labeled 'Tib' now bolsters Bill Dowley's claim to have found a large-sized 'Tib'. The Lasdon plant is much taller and considerably later than those I normally encounter with this name, though it is double and the right color. 'County Wicklow', a usual 'Tib' companion, is doing very well. So are 'Green Cardinal' and 'Cuprea' and 'Spring Torch' making me think these are far better plants than those I had years ago. 'Strawberry Delight' so far is disappointing. The remaining 'Glenfiddich' is recovering. 'Beoley Gold', 'Chase White' and 'Hoyerhagen' are on track, and 'Velvet Fascination' and 'Kinlochruel' are only so-so.

It is a real pleasure to see 'E.F. Brown' so full of promise. This is the best of the fall bloom extenders, I feel, and all the better when the bud-bloomers so far have not lived up to expectations. However, wait till next year and the Lasdon Park score card may turn out to be very different - especially when we get the map and label discrepancies sorted out.

But many visitors care little for labels or plants. They can just enjoy the result. Right now it's good to pretty good - not quite spectacular, but getting there.

It's certainly good enough to be a feature at Lasdon Park (and now described in the Lasdon Park brochure) and certainly good enough for you to direct visitors to in hopes that a new NEHS membership may result. With many Westchester gardens in a state of heat shock, new visitors can wonder at the cool display of the Lasdon Park heathers. Here heathers there, unlike mine, show no sign of heat distress, but that may be because there is no sun after 2pm.

At the time I thought this shading would be detrimental to the heathers, but in retrospect I think we were lucky in the place Lasdon offered for our garden. The staff there seem very pleased with the results. So am I, and I'm sure you will be too.

Calluna vulgaris 'Harry's Grace' - A Performance Review

by Donald Mackay

I have been keeping an eye on the plant I received from Bill Dowley with the instruction to monitor its performance as a new addition to our list of callunas.

To be honest - I always am - its initial behavior was not impressive, and I was grateful to be able to keep it alive through its first winter. Having it die on me was an unbearable thought.

The following spring and summer it grew rather poorly and was in great danger of being overgrown by neighboring vigorous heathers. Still I kept half an eye on it.

Today, Sept. 1, 2010, my eyes were fully opened to a suddenly different looking heather. Overnight it seemed to have acquired neat rows of tightly packed whitish flower buds arranged in orderly rows like suckling pigs - or perhaps like close needlepoint stitches making a line across the canvas.

This plant - as I have already noted - is clearly multibracteate but organized in such neat rows the effect is jewel like, or like a frost-encrustation. With one exception. 'Harry's Grace' now looks unlike any other heather I have seen, multibracteate or not. The plant is low-growing, somewhat flattened yet not prostrate. The flower buds (if such they are) are carried in opposite and opposing ranks on low-branching sprays. At this stage the buds are tiny and pointed and doubtless give the impression of a bud-bloomer, but they have not yet clearly formed. Whether these buds will open and expand only time will tell. In a way I hope they won't as I rather enjoy the zipper-like effect.

This plant is certainly different from other heathers I grow, but I cannot be sure it is the same as the other plants of 'Harry's Grace' that Bill Dowley gave out for evaluation. In fact, I have thought my plant different - mainly much less vigorous - than the examples of 'Harry's Grace' that the Murphys now produce. Side-by-side comparison of the plants given out to the Murphys, to Mary Matwey, Bill Dowley and others is now called for.

The registration of this plant as a new cultivar can now be seen as justified. It has survived a brutal winter and the extended heat of several record heat waves - the 95 to 100° range - and has done so without excessive care and heavy watering.

At this stage of growth one cannot tell what color the flowers will be. It looks like it will be a white heather, but close inspection under a lens shows the whiteness is due to an indumentum or pubescence running down the grooves between the bracts, looking almost like an incipient mildew. At this moment (Sept. 21) there are no signs of any true flower buds, so the whiteness is due entirely to the indumentum, which is more pronounced on one side of the stem than the other. Again it is deceptive. One is tempted to say 'Harry's Grace' has flat sprays of white flowers pointing towards the earth, but in fact there are no flowers yet to point in any direction. It clearly will be a very late bloomer, if indeed it blooms at all. Last year I had noted it for a sparse bloomer when I had only a few faded flowers to go by.

P.S. A side-by-side comparison on Sept. 3rd of a spray from my plant with a Bill Dowley plant grown in Keene, NH shows no obvious difference. Differences to latitude or to growing conditions are not evident. The last winter in Keene was exceptionally mild yet exceptionally destructive of old (uncovered) heathers that might have become susceptible to dehydrating conditions due to over-dependence on shallow rooting of long decumbent stems.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VOTE

A big thank you to all who participated in voting for the NEHS 2010-2011-2012 Exec. Officers and Board Members. The letter which accompanied the ballot explained in detail the reason for taking this unusual step so I will not go there again. But I would like to make two observations. First; I'm sure there were those of you (30%) who considered this exercise as an empty gesture of support for the officers on the slate since you knew nothing about them and that is OK. Second: There were 70% of you who participated and some dear people even included notes of support. Therefore with 70% of our membership voting approval for the 2010-2011-2012 slate of officers the Northeast Heather Society can move forward with a duly elected governing body....Mary Matwey

Small-Scale Propagation using the Forsythe Method

Materials: 1) 2" or 3" clay pot (hole plugged) or clay saucer

1) 6" (or your preference) plastic pot w/ drainage hole

1) clear plastic lid w/small hole for aeration or large

clear plastic soda bottle with bottom cut away.

How to :

1. Rinse all materials in a 10% Clorox and 90% water solution.
2. Fill plastic pot 1/2 full with rooting mixture (3/4 peat moss or organic mulch and 1/4 coarse sand).
3. Place clay pot or clay saucer on the potting mixture in the plastic pot.
4. Fill in and around the clay pot or saucer with additional potting mixture. Firm up.
5. Gently wet potting mixture thoroughly, filling the clay pot or saucer with water at the same time. Firm in rooting mix again. Add water if necessary
6. Make holes in the potting mix around the clay pot with pencil or stick where the cuttings will be inserted.
7. Prepare the cutting (strip bottom foliage from cutting and dip in rooting hormone) and place into holes firming potting mix around each cutting.
8. Label the cuttings.
9. Cover the plastic pot containing cuttings with plastic lid. Your Forsythe pot is now complete.
10. Place Forsythe pot in shaded area out of direct sunlight.
11. Replenish water in clay pot or saucer as needed.
12. Softwood Cuttings should root and show new top growth in approx. 2-3 months. Hardwood cuttings will probably take 6+ months to root. A soft wood cutting is one taken during the growing season of a harden shoot. A hardwood cutting is taken in the fall after active growth has stopped.

HAVE PATIENCE !!

From the President

Heritage Museum and Gardens

Vivagean Merz and Mary Matwey

Heritage Museums & Gardens look wonderful. A new waterfall has been installed which is rather dramatic in a quiet way. 'A Guide by Cell' allows a visitor to call from numerous locations to get information about the site being visited. The grounds are well designed, very neat and well tended. When you look at the map of Heritage you see that the Heather Garden is located near the new fountain/waterfall except there are no signs to show the way to the Heather Garden.

The Heather garden was established in 1991 by Cape Cod members. It flourished for several years but then succumbed to an unusually harsh winter in 2000. In 2002 a combined effort by the Heritage Plantation and the NEHS took on the task of renovating and redesigning the heather bed. Harry Bowen headed up the NEHS committee whose task was to supply the plants, soil amendments and mulch while the Heritage garden staff supplied the labor and site preparation. Once again the heather bed flourished for a while but for unknown reasons it fell to neglect prompting Jeanie Gillis, Director of Horticulture, Heritage Museums & Gardens to remove the signs because she did not feel the garden was a credit to Heritage or NEHS.

In response to my request that a NEHS member evaluate the current condition of the heathers at Heritage Museum and Gardens, Vivagean Merz makes these observations after visiting the site in August, 2010:

- 45 living varieties.
- The heather garden is neat and tidy, but drab.
- Everything looks terribly dry.
- The heather garden had plenty of sun.
- The small evergreens either overshadow the heather with their freshness or save-the-day.
- Plants are labeled.
- The beds were not mulched this year.
- There were no weeds.
- Heather not crowded, not too sparse.

"The garden is probably salvageable with devoted and knowledgeable people."

Despite extremes from Mother Nature, on-again, off-again human intervention, this garden has survived. Couldn't we give it one more try to make it shine and be a showcase for the Heritage Museum and Gardens and the NEHS? Using hind sight as our guide it is evident that unless there is a local group of NEHS member volunteers to take responsibility for this heather garden it will fail again. Let's talk about the extent of a local group's responsibility. The Heritage Garden staff does all the regular maintenance (weeding, tilling, etc). NEHS's responsibility is to support the garden staff with spring trimming, planting and mulching, offering advice as needed and most of all letting the garden staff know you care. If we start off on a small scale working with the garden staff to trim and mulch the existing plants we will then be able to determine the size of the commitment required to take responsibility for the Heritage Heather Garden. I will be in touch with Jeanie soon on their plans toward winterizing the heathers. Trimming doesn't take place until spring so all New England members within a 200 mile radius of the Heritage Heather bed have time to re-arrange your lives for the one day of spring maintenance. The current NEHS spring maintenance crews for Fort Tryon in NYC, Lasdon in Katonah, NY, and The Fells in Newbury, NH come from NY, NJ, PA, NH, MA and CT where 4-5 hour travel times to the events are not unusual. Travel time for New Englanders to Heritage should be half of that. Heritage Garden is willing to give it a try, how about you?

Look for the trimming date in the January, 2011 issue of Heather Notes.

I'll be there and I hope to see you.



Completed Forsythe Pot



STEP-UP

New Englanders!

Be an NEHS volunteer
and/or
representative
at the
Heritage Museum and Gardens
Heather Bed
located in
Sandwich, MA



A Close-up View of the Heather Garden at Heritage



The Heather Garden at Heritage

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, Phyllodoce* 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

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:

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All material may be edited for clarity and length.

DEADLINES FOR EACH ISSUE:

March 20–June 20–September 20–December 20

