



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

by Lewis Carroll

(with the assistance of Charles Nelson)

I called the first half of this fairy-story, appearing in Volume 20, Issue 4 of the Heather Notes, 'The Name Game'. In the second half the 'Taxonomist', Charles Nelson concludes his modified version of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' by showing Alice the procedure for naming a new heather. This procedure was very helpful to members of your Society as we sort of stumbled thru the process of registering a new heather, 'Harry's Grace' found by Harry Bowen in his heather garden.

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Trimming Heather

at

Heritage Museum and Gardens,
Sandwich MA

Please join your fellow NEHS members for trimming the heathers at The Heritage Museum and Gardens on Saturday, April 24, 2011. The date coincides with Heritage's Earth Celebrations Day so the day will have a festive holiday atmosphere. Pack a lunch and bring your clippers. Hopefully we will have heather plants for sale (member prices). Looking forward to renewing old friendships and making a whole lot of new ones.

In The Bewildered Gardener's garden there was a little seedling heather which had sprung up from Nowhere - not an unusual happening. Instead of having green leaves and pink flowers, like many lovely heathers in Alice's Land - otherwise known as The Real World - it had green flowers and pink leaves - how that came about is quite another story. Alice spotted the little seedling and with the help of The Bewildered Gardener took some cuttings. Soon there were lots of nice baby heathers, all with pink leaves and green flowers. Everyone was envious and some kept saying "That's a new heather, and it needs a new name." But Alice, being a wise little girl, wanted to make sure that they had spotted a new plant and that it did not have a name already.

So she trudged off to find the kind-faced, bespectacled Taxonomist, who grew mousetraps and lived in Tippitwitchet Cottage, and asked if he would help her to find out if the heather was *new* and if it needed a special name, all of its own. The nice Taxonomist who doubled as Registrar for The Heather Society, was very helpful. He looked in countless dusty books, spoke to his friends in faraway lands, and scratched his head. Eventually he pronounced his verdict - The Bewildered Gardener's heather really was new and it did not have a name.

"Let's name it", said Alice excitedly, "after The Jabberwocky because it loves strange things like Tumtum trees." (For a while Alice thought she would have to name her lovely new heather after some famous but crusty old botanist, or, even worse, give it a Latin name - she shivered at the thought that Snap-dragon -fly was known, in italics, to scientists as *Calidopteryx*, and Rocking-horse-fly was *Asinasilus vacillantus*.)

"That's alright", said The Taxonomist helpfully, "as long as The Jabberwocky's name has not been used for a heather before. Now, before we do anything, let's make sure we follow the rules about giving new names to new garden plants. We can't just plump for any old name and use it willy-nilly. We'll have to ensure that the heather's new name is properly published so that no-one, not even that crafty old Greenfingers the Nurseryman, can change it."

"How do we do that", asked Alice, a little impatiently. So the very wise, kind (this is a fairy story) taxonomist carefully wrote down the steps Alice had to follow to name her heather. Here are the most important ones.

1. ☞ *Make sure that the new plant is new, and that it does not resemble closely any other plant, especially one of its close relatives. (special trial grounds for testing)*

Continued on page 2

☞ Write a detailed description of the new plant. (use colour charts, measurements and a few, quite easy technical terms to make sure the description is precise)

☞ Contact the international cultivar registration authority and register the new name.

☞ Make a permanent record of the new plant.

(photograph it in colour, and then have a specimen (some typical flowers with lots of leaves) pressed, dried, labeled all of which will be filed away for future reference).

☞ Publish the accurate description, and perhaps a photograph, in a dated journal or dated catalogue.

By the by, the rules about naming plants here in The Real World are just the same as those Alice was shown but, as we all know, leaves are usually green and many heathers have pink flowers and, as in all the best fairy stories, every Taxonomist has a kindly face.

[This updated fairy story takes into account the *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants*, eighth edition, 2009.]

Erica quadrangularis

Hardy in zones 9 and 10

I like to think of myself as a knowledgeable heather gardener, not one to be snookered into buying the typical “Holiday” blooming heathers (*Erica*). But when I saw this heather, ***Erica quadrangularis***, being sold in one of my favorite gardening catalogs as a holiday gift plant, I had to have this outrageously expensive offering. Two reasons: first, I have never heard or read any description on this species of *Erica* (although as a Northeast US heather grower, I might be considered as leading an *Erica* starved life) and second I would like to see more of my favorite gardening catalogs sell heather and maybe the prices will go down. This new acquisition will definitely be grown on, indoors, in a pot and set outdoors, still potted, when the weather warms. I wrote this as I was awaiting its arrival and now that it has arrived I couldn't be happier with the size, profusion of bloom and the overall condition of the plant. The picture shown is taken on my enclosed porch, safe from the snowy outside weather, along side of rescued Geraniums and pots of forced Tulips. If anyone can enlighten me on the particulars (origins etc) of this ***Erica quadrangularis*** please share your information by writing or emailing the Editor of the Heather Notes. Wait a minute! On closer observation, I have found that each tiny stem off the larger stems ends in a cluster of four bell shaped flowers. The species name makes sense now.



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Heather Bits

Talk about naming heathers:

Miss Anne Moseley, a nurse, found her famous Calluna in Cornwall in 1929. The British address a nurse as 'Sister' regardless of the religious affiliation of the hospital, and Miss Moseley's own sister called her Sister Anne. Hence we have C.v. 'Sister Anne' with all its lovely, curling, swirling stems.

Any Erica or Calluna with the word Underwood or any contraction thereof in its cultivar name came from the family Underwood who owned a nursery at Hookstone Green in Surrey England.

Excerpt HN Vol.1-3, 1991, "A Little Bit of Horticultural History", by Judy Anmahian

Winter is here already!

Central NY has seen snow since Thanksgiving, with varying amounts of accumulation. We've had two straight weeks of temperatures in the 20s, two days with temps in the 50s and rain that melted all the snow that fell in between. Now they say to get ready for a real arctic blast that won't warm up much above 20 degrees, day or night. Bring it on! My heathers are ready. Are yours?

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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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

DAVID SMALL - 1939 to 2010

by Donald A.M. Mackay

A very important man, David Small, has died. It makes me sad to think that maybe some Northeast Heather Society members do not know of his many contributions to the world of heathers and therefore do not share the profound loss of this man. Few of us in America have had the privilege to meet this great man but as you read about his life and his dedication to heathers in the tributes to follow, I hope you will pause for just a moment and acknowledge his accomplishments. How many of you have the spiral booklet, Handy Guide to Heathers, that he and his wife Anne put together with the help of many heather experts? First published in 1992, this is the definitive source of information on every Erica and Calluna registered at the time it was last published (flower color, height & width, growing habit, origin, in most cases a colored photo and tidbits of interesting information where available). It currently is unavailable for purchase which I'm sure is related to David's declining health over the past several years. I tried to purchase a copy in 2005 but was told a new edition was in the works and I was put on a waiting list. That never materialized. It is my sincere hope that some one in "The Heather Society" based in Britain, will pick up where David and Anne Small left off with this publication. The book's companion website, www.heathersociety.org.uk/handy_guide.html, is very important and as I make this request for its continuation as a heather resource, I am aware of and sincerely appreciate the enormous under taking this will be. On behalf of the Northeast Heather Society I extend our heartfelt sympathies to David's family and to all members of "The Heather Society".

Mary Matwey

I think quite a few of us knew David Small was sick, and perhaps some that he was seriously ill, but I doubt any of us were prepared for the awful suddenness of the news that he had died. Giants don't die, and he was certainly among the giants of the heather world.

I first met David at one of the Annual Heather Conferences held in the UK when I was too diffident to ask questions from the floor in the presence of such luminaries as Turpin, McClintock, Julian, Hall, et al, but I found it easy to talk one-on one-with the Heather Society Chairman himself. He was so approachable, so generous with his time, so skilled in hiding his surprise at questions that surely revealed a profound ignorance of the topic, that it was easy to confuse his roles of master gardener, Society officer, successful nursery operator and indeed, scientist.

His botany certainly excelled mine with many inputs from the world's botanic literature, such as that on moorland ecology, initiation of meristem growth, or the benefits of misting as distinct from simply keeping the humidity high around heather cuttings.

He always seemed a step ahead, as in publishing (with his son) the use of DNA patterns in sorting out heather species relationships. I was thinking about it; he was doing it.

I will leave to others an appreciation of his efforts in guiding The Heather Society through many years of growth, but those of us in North America have surely had much to gain for **The Heather Society's Handy Guide to Heathers** which all of us must have found invaluable, if only in tracking down a forgotten plant in a corner of the garden, or an unreadable label. He himself had no need of references, books, manuals or even enchiridions in identifying a plant. His knowledge was astounding even for someone whose business was in growing so many different heathers.

But there was more to it than just knowing; it was the imparting of the knowing. He was kind, he was forbearing, he was forgiving, but above all he was patient. No gardener too new, no novice so non-plussed, no question too dumb that his reservoir of patience and consideration was ever depleted.

A true gentleman whose loss to us of the heather world, great though it is, has to be put in perspective to that of his family loss. Our condolences go out to them. He will be surely and sorely missed.

At least I have my own condolences in the memories of his visits here, of the brand new heathers he brought to these shores with names I had never heard of, and the number of treasures that visitors would be sure to leave with. And I will treasure his books, the guides he wrote with his wife Anne, and with the excellent book recently co-authored with Ella May Wulff. Although I don't know who wrote which word, I am prepared to give him credit for all the parts that bring his consideration, his kindness, his gentleness and his humanity back to life.

Dear Heather Colleague,

Nov. 15,2010

It is with deep sadness that I have to inform you that our revered immediate past president David Small died at 11.00pm yesterday evening, 11th November 2010. The Heather Society has lost its rock on which it has relied for so many years and will be lost for some time at his passing

Jean Preston (formerly Jean Julian)

Hon Secretary

The Heather Society

“The most characteristic mark of a great mind is to choose some one important object, and pursue it for life.”

Anna Letita Barbould (1743-1825)

~How fortunate for us that David choose heather.~

A tribute to the life of David Small

by Jean Preston (formerly Jean Julian)

Hon Secretary—The Heather Society

David Small joined the Heather Society in 1966 at the age of 25 thus adding a breath of youth to the founding members. Many other younger people soon followed and if he did not initiate their joining his enthusiasm for heathers encouraged them to stay.

David John Small was born in the south east of London on 8th December 1939. He came from a sea faring family, which had moved to the city from Kent. His father worked in the docks. His first recollections of living there are from the later years of the second world war. In 1944 the local station took a hit from a V2 rocket. It flattened nearby houses and he remembers the windows coming in and milk bottles flying about the room. His mother was buried under fallen ceiling which must have been quite a traumatic incident for a 5 year old. Although she recovered and none of the family was seriously hurt it must have affected them as they moved north until the end of the war.

David met Anne at the local tennis club and they were married three years later setting up home in Plumstead, part of the city. South east London is an impoverished area of the city and having married young and just set up home, they could not afford to purchase plants for the garden they had just laid out. David thought that by joining the society he would get lots of free plants given by other members. He chose the Heather Society as included in the alpine plants they had bought was an Erica x darleyensis ‘Darley Dale’, which they had been told was a low maintenance plant. As they were both working this suited them well.

In 1967 David attended the Annual General Meeting in London where members were wearing sprigs of heather in their buttonholes. The secretary, Constance Macleod, had a different sprig, one of ‘Erica speciosa.’ David was smitten, he persuaded her to give it to him and on his return home he immediately propagated it. By now they had moved to a bungalow with quite a large garden, so in his spare time he produced and sold Cape heaths, a plant quite unknown in the UK at that time. It had been grown in “orangeries” in the Victorian times but had fallen from sale in the twentieth century.

His love of Cape heaths continued and when his employers (he was a chartered electrical engineer with British Telecom) moved him to their research station near Ipswich he together with Anne started up their business, Denbeigh Heathers. In their first year (1972) they sold Cape heaths only but the following year expanded to propagate and sell all forms of heather, eventually building it up into a full time business.

David joined the Heather Society Council in 1978 working his way up to Chairman of the Technical Committee and eventually to Chairman and President. He was not really a gardener but a great plants man. His knowledge of heathers was second to none and he travelled the world for the opportunity to see heathers, propagate them and then pass on the knowledge. I remember well climbing hills in Majorca in December when it was snowing steadily in order to find new varieties of Erica multiflora, a seriously lime loving plant.

He was a kind and generous man with both his friendship and his knowledge. He had a brilliant brain and would have gone far if he had continued in his profession but he was happiest with his family and the majority of photographs I have seen of him show him rolling on the floor with his grandchildren. He was at his happiest when working with heathers.

HEATH AND HEATHER TRIALS AT LONGWOOD GARDENS REPORT

By: Barrett C. Wilson

P.O. Box 501, Kennett Square, PA 19348

Purpose of the trial

The heath and heather trials at Longwood Gardens evaluated the growth of several cultivars of *Erica vagans* (Cornish heath), *Erica x darleyensis* (Darley heath), and *Calluna vulgaris* (common, or Scotch heather). This small-scale trial was an effort to identify varieties with potential to perform well in Longwood Gardens' soil and climate.

Procedure

Plants were received from Rock Spray Nursery (Truro, MA) in April 2008. Though planting space was limited, plants were selected to represent the diversity of heaths and heathers available. Selected plants were *Erica vagans* 'St. Keverne', *Erica x darleyensis* 'Furzey', *Erica x darleyensis* 'Mary Helen', *Calluna vulgaris* 'Gold Haze', and *Calluna vulgaris* 'Green Cardinal'. All were grown in 6-inch pots. In total, forty plants were included in the trial (8 plants per cultivar).

Two planting beds were used; one was a raised bed with added soil and the other was a normal bed with plants directly in the ground. Chosen for improved drainage, the raised bed was constructed from 4x4 timbers and was 2 ft. high, 5 ft. wide, and 40 ft. long. The in-ground bed was measured out to the same length and width as the raised bed. Pine straw was used as mulch. Half of each bed was adjusted with garden sulfur to lower the pH to the accepted favorable range for *Calluna* and *Erica* (5-6)

2008: Establishment and Growth

First year growth and establishment was measured with a growth index (GI). GI was calculated with the following formula: $(width\ 1 + width\ 2 + height) / 3$. The two measures of plant width were taken perpendicularly to each other. Overall, plants in the raised bed showed a larger increase in GI (3.60 cm) during the growing season vs. the in-ground bed (2.38 cm). GI change for the *E. x darleyensis* cultivars 'Mary Helen' and 'Furzey' was higher than the others. 'Green Cardinal' and 'Gold Haze' had the lowest GI.

2008-09: Survival

Across all cultivars, overall survival in the ground bed was higher (90%) vs. the raised bed (75%). Cultivars with the highest GI during the preceding growing season also had greatest survival. 'Mary Helen', 'Furzey', and 'St. Keverne' all had 100% survival. The *Calluna* cultivars, 'Green Cardinal' and 'Gold Haze', had 50% and 62.5% survival, respectively. Second-year survival was 85% for the ground bed and 75% for the raised bed. The overall survival of the *Erica* cultivars was greater than the *Calluna* cultivars in both planting beds.

Conclusions

The data suggest that *Erica* is a better choice than *Calluna* for growing in Longwood Gardens' conditions. Not only did *Erica* show more vigorous growth during the first growing season, second-year measures of survival were also higher. In particular, growth and survival of *Erica x darleyensis* was most impressive. If a low-growing, perennial shrub is desired for future garden designs, a logical step would be to identify *Erica x darleyensis* cultivars that meet the desired foliage and flowering characteristics. Another interesting finding is that soil pH did not appear to significantly affect the growth or survival of either *Calluna* or *Erica*, at least not during the two years of this project. A more important factor in field performance appears to be soil physical properties and/or planting in sites that favor increased drainage of excess moisture.

Additional Remarks: Based on the feedback from the plant evaluation meetings, I don't expect we'll have any new large *Erica* plantings anytime soon. I do expect to continue evaluating some new cultivars here at the nursery.

Also, we do periodically trial different *Ericas* for potential use indoors in our conservatory. Some that we currently have in our research greenhouses are: *Erica cinerea* 'Golden Hue', *Erica erigena* 'Irish Dusk', *Erica gracilis*

So, we're not giving up on them; I'll do some catalog research over the winter and probably choose 2 cultivars (either *Erica* or *Calluna*) to fit in our outdoor trials longer term.

I look forward to receiving any feedback from the article. Have a happy holiday!

NEHS Response: *Please write to Barrett Wilson at Longwood Gardens (address above) with comments on the report and request that they continue their work trialing heathers. Other species and cultivars of Erica and Calluna should do well in that area as they do for those of you who live in that vicinity.*



NEHS Schedule of Events 2011

Fort Tryon, Heather Trimming

Manhattan, NY

April 9, Saturday, 10 am
with rain date on April 16th

NEHS Board Meeting
after trimming

The Heritage Museum & Gardens, Heather Trimming

67 Grove Street,
Sandwich, MA 02563

April 24, Saturday, 10 am
Pack a Lunch

The Fells, Heather Trimming,

Newbury, NH

May 7, Sat.

with rain date on May 14th

NEHS Board Meeting
after trimming,
Pack a Lunch

NEHS Annual Meeting and Heather Conference Binghamton, NY

≈

August 26, 27, 28

Look for Registration and event
schedule in April issue Heather
Notes

Having tired of purchasing or growing from seed the annuals (6-8 dozen plants) to fill the holes in my knot garden I planted instead *Calluna vulgaris* 'Alba Elegans'. My choice was based on the fact that I found myself with an over abundance of this cultivar. As so often happens with those plants that you have not paid any attention to, some of these turned out to be something quite different altogether and I found a few pink bud bloomers. These I removed to a more selective spot and replaced with more 'Alba Elegans' for a total of 18 heathers in the knot garden. They were planted in June but as I look at this garden with just the tips of the heather peeking out of the snow, guess what I'm thinking. You got it. Wouldn't it be a whole lot more enjoyable and interesting with red, burgundy or orange tips peeking out of the white stuff.



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

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

