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### MEMBERSHIP LIST

#### IMPORTANT -Please Read

As required by the NEHS bylaws a list of active NEHS members is included as an insert in this issue.

**If your information , especially email , requires updating, please contact Peter Matwey, Treasurer. His email address is pmatwey@stny.rr.com**

## NORTHEAST HEATHER SOCIETY



**HOSTS NORTH AMERICAN HEATHER SOCIETY  
ANNUAL HEATHER CONFERENCE... AUGUST 15-17, 2014**

### Registration Details

**inside on pages 6 & 7**

### Jack and the Beanstalk. Vermont Version

by Donald Mackay

Maybe this should be titled Jock and the Jabberwocks, since this is really a tale about a Scotsman and a potential monster heather.

After less than stellar success with growing *Calluna vulgaris* 'Harry's Grace' in Westchester County, NY, I made another try with it in Vermont in Zone 3B. For a couple of years it did well in a self-deprecating way, but showed up well in time for last year's Annual Conference where it covered itself with glory and a mantle of unopened buds.

However, after this recent exceptionally hard winter featuring brutal below-zero frosts when snow cover was barely existent between the heather branches, 'Harry's Grace' has really taken off like Jack's beans and long branches are now spreading into and between the surrounding heathers. The flowering, as attested by rows of packed flower buds, has been immense, and the plant shows no obvious signs of damage.

The buds still show no sign of opening, and unlike all the spent flowers on other heathers are still firmly attached. There has been no flower drop-off at all, which creates a complicated pruning problem. No dead or dried flowers, no bare stems, no natural place to aim the pruning shears.

Still growth was getting rampant, and neighboring plants were starting to suffer, so I just lopped off about 4" or 5" from the stems, leaving, it seemed, as many flower buds as before. What will happen when new growth starts and new budded stems appear? Will the older buds then dehisce and leave the dreaded sections of bare stems? We'll just have to wait and see.

One peculiar thing I did notice was that the stems of 'Harry's Grace' were very brittle, bending hardly at all before snapping off. But the foliage in the detached pieces appeared as resilient as usual. No sign of damage, yet, but wait till these stems start reaching for the clouds and the unknown giants in the sky.

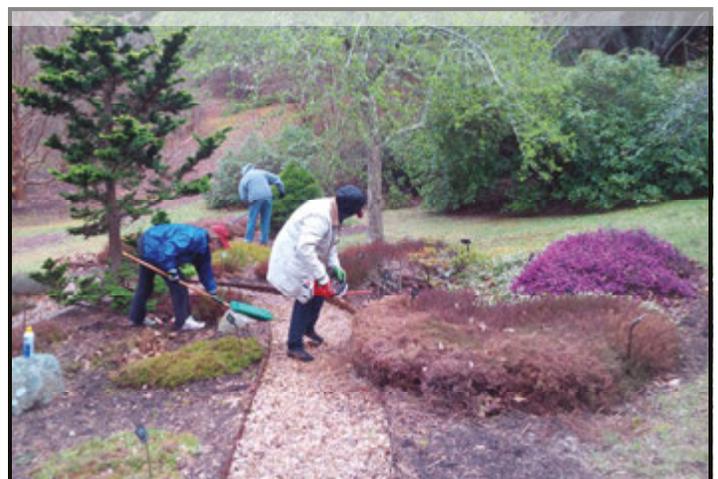
'No sense waiting for the cows to come home. Jack has already sold them.'

## Regional Reports by Mary Matwey

A picture is worth a thousand words so here is the good, the bad and the worst.



Lasdon Heather Garden, West Chester Co. New York: Picture was taken May 16 and the Calluna are putting on new growth with a promise of nice blooms. However in the foreground, what was *E. carnea* 'Springwood White and Pink' has been trimmed back to ground level.



Heritage Heather Garden, Sandwich, MA: Some Calluna were dry and brittle twigs while others were in fair shape. Interestingly though, all *Ericas* were blooming profusely.



The Fells in Newbury, NH: This garden of Calluna located on top of a knoll showed usual winter damage but nothing that this hardy plant cannot overcome.



Town of Chenango Heather, Binghamton NY: This could have been worse in that the *Erica* might have died also. The winter damage to all the heather in this south central area of NY was totally unprecedented. The Town of Dickinson and Cutler garden lost all the *Erica* and 70% of the Calluna; Town of Chenango lost all its Calluna but none of the *Erica*, The Broome Co. Library heather garden only lost 2 Calluna; all heather in my north facing garden survived while a young south facing heather garden was 95% dead and my island heather bed lost 50% of the Calluna.



Fort Tryon, Manhattan, NY: Look closely and you can see blooms at the tips of the *Ericas* while the center of most plants are split and brittle twigs. The Calluna fared much better showing only the usual winter damage for an unprotected site. The latest news from Tryon is that the *Erica* came back better than expected and future plans are pending.



### The Silent Invader

Vinca major which is definitely hardy in zone 7 quietly crept underground around a new patio and entered this heather bed in fall 2012. Not being able to deal with it then I was faced with this disaster in summer 2013! In the Spring I thought the variegated vine with the pretty blue flowers would be a nice companion while I decided what other shrubs to plant with the heathers. What a mistake! I spent a few weekends getting rid of this thug and applying more mulch. If I even see one variegated leaf in this bed it will be pulled out immediately.  
by Pat Hoffman

### 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 B

## NEHS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS, 2013

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## President's Report - Feb 2014

Donald Mackay

Professor Ed Barrows of Georgetown University sent me a reprint (Primack, R.B. et al. 2012. "Early Bloomers" NY Times, April 18) describing how Henry David Thoreau kept careful records of the dates of the first flowers seen in Concord, MA.

The first flower on a highbush blueberry was recorded on May 11, 1853, in subsequent years appearing from May 14 to 18; but today the first flower appears three weeks or more earlier. In fact, in 2012 the first flower appeared on April 1, six weeks earlier than Thoreau recorded it. The flowering of other species like shadbush and marsh marigold have also advanced greatly, but most species like the birdfoot violet, rhodora and dogwood have advanced much less. April temperatures in Concord have risen by 8°F over the past 160 years, probably due to increased paving and recently global warming. Responsive plants advanced first flowering by two days for every degree rise in temperature.

The report suggests that survivability of a species may be linked to its responsiveness to the warming trend; good news for *Vaccinium corymbosum* and maybe not for *Rhododendron canadensis*. Since both are *Ericaceae*, it suggests that we as heather gardeners should be alert to the effect of warming trends on callunas and ericas.

My message, therefore, is to ask you to buy a school notebook and start to record the first flowering dates of the heathers in your garden. If heathers are at risk we should be the first to know, though of course like you, I would expect our favorite plants to do just as well as any blueberry.

Still we won't know until someone (you?) starts keeping records. Maybe you have already, in which case you should speak up. You could be the next Thoreau.

### Special Thank You

The old adage that someone's misfortune is someone else's good fortune is proven true once again. The misfortune is that Bill Dowley's nursery, New England Heathers, in Keene, NH will close its doors this summer as Bill and Vicky are moving to sunny Delaware. I'm sure Bill and Vicky do not consider this a misfortune as they are moving closer to family and warmer weather and we wish them the very best. Bill's NH home was the gathering place for NEHS members traveling to The Fells for the spring trimming. We will miss the wine, the good food and camaraderie we've shared at the Dowley B&B. Fortunately for the NEHS, Bill has donated his remaining nursery stock of Erica and Calluna to the society, to be planted at the various heather gardens the society supports. Some of Bill's plants will be used for the expansion of Lasdon's heather garden and some as replacement heather for the gardens in the Binghamton area. Will he continue to dabble in growing heather? Only the Delaware climate will determine if that is one of his options. I do hope so since Bill is one of these rare creatures with the gift to "make sticks come to life".

### ***PLANTS WITH WINTER COLOR***

Heath • Heather • Witch Hazels

Dwarf & Mini Conifers

Japanese Maples • Twig Dogwoods

### **HICKORY HILL HEATHER**

Paul & Jane Murphy

2473 Hickory Hill Road, Oxford, PA 19363

[www.hickoryhillheather.com](http://www.hickoryhillheather.com)

*Hours By Appointment*

610-932-3408

If there has been any benefit to this past winter at all it has been to see how the heathers have survived in freakish winter conditions. Apart from the very unusual experience of David Wilson, when a very strong cold wind blew down from the interior mountains of British Columbia and killed all the callunas in his nursery gardens but left the erica unharmed, the usual superiority of calluna to erica in surviving wintery conditions was overwhelmingly made clear in nearly every part of the NEHS territory.

Apart from Mary Matwey's dissent, based on the report from Chenango, Binghamton, where ericas seemed to have done better than calluna, very few callunas showed any winter damage when damage to ericas was universally devastating. Areas from Baltimore north reported almost total loss of *Erica xdarleyensis* cultivars with thick stems shattering into multi-stranded sections and their stems going brittle after losing their desiccated foliage. Things were no better at Fort Tryon at the upper tip of Manhattan, where only some carneas were showing patches of color. The darleyensis cultivars were toast.

All *E. xdarleyensis* cultivars at the NEHS garden at Lasdon Park (near Katonah, about 45 miles north of NYC) were seen to be destroyed when the snow finally melted at the end of March. 'Kramer's Rote' was a wipe-out. So was 'Silberschmelze'. Only one trailing branch of 'Pirbright Rose' showed any life at all, and that could have been only a last gasp. 'Pirbright Rose' is listed as a carnea, but it certainly behaved like a darleyensis at Lasdon.

The other Erica carneas there did only slightly better. 'Springwood White' and 'Springwood Pink', formerly ironclads, lost at least half their foliage and will probably need replacement. *Erica carnea* 'Westwood Yellow' showed by far the least damage to the carneas. A bell heather, probably mistakenly labeled *E. cinerea* 'Smith's Variety', was completely dead, but cinereas though surviving Scottish winters with ease have a very bad time getting through a Vermont winter. This past winter was particularly severe on cinereas in my Vermont garden where I take great pains to cover the bell heather with many layers of balsam boughs, partly to shade them from the winter sun but mainly to attract and keep a good depth of snow above the plant all winter. Most years I lose about half of the branches which shatter or break and cause the foliage to dry out. This past year I lost 80 to 90% of the branches, but there were a few pieces of greenery that give hope the plant will recover as usual.

In Vermont I have grown *Erica xgriffithsii* for several years without protection other than the deep snow cover expected every year. This year 'Valerie Griffiths' has gone completely, a result I attribute entirely to a bitterly cold December (the first of the Arctic Vortices) when there was very little snow on the ground, just a thin residue of the heavy snows that started after Thanksgiving but then almost completely petered out until restarting in mid-January after almost two weeks of below zero temperatures.

In mid-March a patch of snow shaded by a pine tree finally melted to reveal a patch of *Erica spiculifolia* without obvious damage, but the Balkan Heath is as hardy as would be expected of its alpine origin.

In fact, based on Westchester and Vermont experience, very cold weather in Westchester, extremely cold in Vermont, with minimal snow cover in both places when the Arctic Vortex arrived, allows me to assert that only of *E. spiculifolia* can it not be said 'Alter tulit honores'.

Next hardiest is *Erica carnea* of the trailing ground-hugging type. If they get too big and bushy they suffer like the darleyensis. *Erica tetralix* ranks pretty high in cold tolerance, but in exceptionally bad winters it too will suffer and produce desiccated foliage on brittle stems.

Although I can easily propose a hardiness ranking ranging from *Erica spiculifolia* to *E. xdarleyensis*, putting *E. watsonii* rather high up (above the middle) closer to *E. tetralix*. I am left with problems placing *E. vagans*. Native to the warmest part of England, it is a plant very easily damaged by cold (stem splitting occurs very easily) but not killed by it. *Erica vagans* and also *E. xdarleyensis*, share a remarkable ability to regenerate growth from split and shattered stems but requiring several years to regrow to a presentable size. The other anomaly is *Erica arborea alpina*, which though the hardiest of the *E. arborea* group, still has the reputation of cold sensitivity. However, a small plant, heavily covered with oak leaves in a mesh cage, came through the winter without damage, both in Vermont and in Westchester. We need to see how larger plants fare in extreme cold.

# NEHS Annual Conference August 15-17

The Northeast Heather Society is pleased to invite all heather enthusiasts to a summer conference in southeastern coastal New England.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Our home base for August 15 & 16 will be the Ramada Inn/Hilltop Hotel and Conference Center (formerly the Johnson & Wales Inn), 213 Taunton Avenue, Seekonk, MA 02771. The hotel is on the Massachusetts/Rhode Island border, an easy drive to points along, and inland from, the coasts of both states. We have a block of 20 rooms reserved at the rates of \$85 (standard) and \$95 (Deluxe), for August 13-18.

Reservations: 508-336-8700 or 800-232-1772. Ask for the "Northeast Heather Society block". The block rates will be held until July 15, but it is wise to book early for these rates in this area.

## CONFERENCE OPTIONS

Friday: 3:00 p.m. A tour of the gardens of Andrew Grossman, a garden designer who lives about one mile from the Ramada Inn. We can car pool to this site. [www.andrewgrossman.com](http://www.andrewgrossman.com). A hospitality suite in the hotel has been reserved for our group. Stop by for refreshments and information. A nearby restaurant is reserved for a group dinner.

Saturday: We will travel by coach bus to tour two private gardens before and after our visit to Sylvan Nursery. One of their specialties is the growing of superb heath and heather varieties. We will have lunch on the nursery premises.

Sunday: All are invited to hop over (carpool or on your own) to Connecticut for brunch at the home of Ralph and Judy Doyle. Nearby are Logee's Greenhouses ([www.logees.com](http://www.logees.com)) and Quackin' Grass Nursery ([quackingrassnursery.com](http://quackingrassnursery.com)) to explore on your own.

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## CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate each event(s) you will attend:

Friday: Garden Tour..... \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Friday: Dinner..... \$30 \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday: Garden tours (includes bus) and lunch \$60 \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday: Dinner..... \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday: Brunch with the Doyles (CT) \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#of attendees \_\_\_\_\_ x event costs total \_\_\_\_\_ =Total payment enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Detach and Mail this completed form with total payment (check or money order payable to NEHS)

Send to:

Peter Matwey, Treasurer NEHS  
7 Heights Court,  
Binghamton, NY 13905

Contact: (607) 723-1418 or [pmatwey@stny.rr.com](mailto:pmatwey@stny.rr.com)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 1

## NEHS Conference Garden Tours

*FRIDAY, August 15, 2014 GARDEN TOUR*

Andrew Grossman landscape Designer Seekonk MA

[www.andrewgrossman.com](http://www.andrewgrossman.com)

Currently, Andrew Grossman's display gardens include a blue and white garden with a rectangular lily pool, a hot-colored garden with a checkerboard thyme patio, a cottage garden, a cutting garden, and a water feature surrounded by bog plantings. The gardens, which border the Martin Wildlife Refuge and the Runnins River, showcase a wide variety of perennials, shrubs and grasses.

*The first garden we visit on Saturday in Dartmouth, has been evolving for almost 40 years.*

The owners, who have lived here since 1971, are hands-on gardeners and avid plant collectors whose passions include roses, succulents, hostas, Japanese maples, flowering trees and conifers. Working first with the late Allen C. Haskell, and since 2004 with Nan Sinton of Sinton & Michener Associates, the owners have expanded and enhanced the plantings and in 2005 took in a previously undeveloped two acres at the rear of the property. When describing the style of the landscape Nan Sinton calls it a "contemporary stroll garden" which invites the visitor to explore different garden vignettes and vistas, color combinations and sensory experiences.



*The second private garden we will visit is in Westport. The potential for year-round river views drew the owners of the garden in Westport to purchase land on a wooded peninsula.*

Working with the old trees and the natural contours of the land, they built their house to take advantage of the extraordinary river views. The driveway leads past a composition of natural planting around a vernal pool, home in spring to a chorus of frogs. By mid-summer the area glows with iris, cardinal flowers, black-eyed susans and Joe Pye weed. On the water side, landscape designer Nan Sinton has enhanced the garden, creating transitional plantings as foreground to the magnificent views of the Westport River. Upright junipers and clipped inkberry hollies echo the native vegetation and provide year-round structure. Unusual perennials and summer flowering shrubs take full advantage of this special microsite. Blue gates lead to the point, past a grouping of stone 'chairs' to a 'secret' seating area with its own unexpected views. Sculptures, summer bulbs and dramatic container plantings punctuate this four season garden.



**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, Phyllocladus* 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](http://www.northamericanheathersoc.org)

NORTHEAST HEATHER SOCIETY website: [www.northeastheathersociety.org](http://www.northeastheathersociety.org)

**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](mailto: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

