



IMPORTANT NEHS WEBSITE ENHANCEMENTS

By: Mary Matwey Website Caretaker

www.northeastheathersociety.org

In This Issue

Website Enhancements-----	pg 1
Editor's Note-----	pg 1
2015 Trimming Schedule-----	pg 2
Featured Plant-----	pg 2
Perils of Poling-----	pg 2
President's Message-----	pg 3
Garden Gate Responds-----	pg 4
Pruning-----	pg 4
Walter Wornick-----	pg 6
The White Stuff-----	pg 6
K. Kramer Photos-----	pg 7

Before I discuss the new information available on the Northeast Heather Society's website I must relay the news that prompted the changes to our website. Recently the Yearbooks of The Heather Society (United Kingdom) were made available to all visitors of the www.heathersociety.org.uk website.

With the co-operation of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, all the back-issues of the Society's yearbooks, from 1963 up to and including *Heathers 7* (2010), are now available on Biodiversity Heritage Library. Once on the site you can select a Yearbook issue and the content will be displayed one page at a time. You can select a particular page from a small menu on the left of the page and an additional menu below that will tell you what scientific names, if any, appear on that page. The issue can also be downloaded to your computer.

A request was submitted to me as caretaker of the NEHS website to make all the Heather Notes available to any visitor to the NEHS website. This was no problem since all Heather Notes were already scanned into digital format (pdf). This was a project that Jane Murphy, Publisher of the HN, and myself as Editor of the HN have been working on since 2009. Additionally all HN articles were logged into a database in any one of 27 different categories from "Books & Presentations" to "Website". This database has the capability to generate Queries extracting information from the database using specified search criteria. Currently on the **Heather Notes page** of the NEHS website there are 11 "Topic of Interest" files which you can search and find an article in the corresponding Heather Notes (97 volumes uploaded).

The Topics of Interest are :

Books & Presentations	Companion Plants	Facts & Questions	Garden Design
Maintenance	Plants & Culture	Problems	Propagation
Public Heather Gardens	Reports & Studies	Soil & Bed Preparation	

The first filename on the list is called **README FIRST**. Click on this filename and you will see the following instructions on how to find articles of interest in the complete set of Heather Notes.

README FIRST

Follow these steps to find articles of interest in the Heather Notes:

1. Select and Click on a "Topic of Interest" from the list.
2. You will see information in a spreadsheet format that will list the **Date, HN Vol(?)No(?), Page No. Article Title, Author, and Topic (a brief description of the article)**.
3. Jot down the HN Vol(?)No(?) and Pg. No. of the article that interests you and close the file.
4. Next find and Click on the HN Vol(?)No(?) containing the article. Scroll to the page where the article can be found. Enjoy.

Editor's Note by Mary Matwey

It is unfortunate that a few of our long standing members have resigned from the society in recent years. Of these members the general reason was that they were unable to maintain their heathers due to health issues or habitat changes. With the availability (no loginname or password) of all the Heather Notes on the NEHS website www.northeastheathersociety.org anyone, regardless of membership status, can keep abreast of the Society's news. If they have a computer or can ask a friend or family member to open the NEHS, NAHS or THS websites for them the world of heathers will be at their fingertips. I will request the NEHS Corresponding Secretary, Peter Matwey, to send a complimentary copy of this quarter's newsletter to them in the hopes that will read this announcement and take advantage of this 21st century convenience.

FEATURED PLANTAND A PRUNING LESSON



Garden Gate magazine used *Calluna vulgaris* 'Firefly' in the eNote to subscribers to demonstrate where to trim back last years flowers.

It is a great choice showing the wonderful winter foliage.

Plant specs: *Calluna vulgaris* 'Firefly'
Ht. 13" Spd. 14"

Deep mauve flowers, Aug. - Sept. with the foliage shades of terracotta in summer turning to a striking brick red in winter.

For more great gardening tips visit GardenGateMagazine.com

© Garden Gate magazine

2015 Heather Trimming Schedule

Fort Tryon
Manhattan, NY
April 11, 10:15 am

Lasdon Park Arboretum
Katoneh, NY
April 13, 10:30 am

Heritage Museum
& Gardens
Sandwich, MA
April 25, 10 am

The Fells
Newport, NH
TBA (early May)

The Perils of Poling

by Donald Mackay

I bought myself a pair of snowshoes for Christmas, the new fancy kind made of plastic riveted to an aluminum frame. Now that March had arrived I thought I should use them to investigate some tracks across my heather garden. With all this blether of desperate deer deracinating daboecias (and other heathers) I decided to check whether deer tracks, if such they were, correlated with holes pawed through the snow to access the shrubs below.

The snow was over three feet deep and very fluffy powder snow due to almost a whole month of nighttimes below zero temperatures (that's Fahrenheit, or -18° Centigrade). It soon became clear that plastic and aluminum fell far short of the wood and rawhide webbing that trappers and woodsmen had developed over the centuries. My new snowshoes plunged tiringly deep into the snow at each step, but worse were quite unstable in the loose snow.

Finally, I fell sideways and then the trouble started. It was impossible to get back on my feet. My arms failed to reach the ground and my hands could create no resistance in the snow. Luckily I had ski poles with me, but unluckily I had fallen on them and could not get them out of the snow. Luckily I did not have the straps on my wrists, but unluckily the snow under me was now packed hard enough to pin me down. Luckily my struggles eventually created a bathtub so I could get my feet lower to the ground than my body so I slowly managed to struggle back to a shaky upright position. But unluckily my bathtub completely overlapped that that a hungry deer might have made over my heather bed, so luckily this chapter of deer feeding preferences must now conclude.

I just hope there are not too many broken down heather stems to be seen come May or June. I won't be able to blame the cold weather for that.

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

President's Message

Judged by the membership response, the question of NEHS taking part in a larger Heather Newsletter in exchange for chapter dues paid to NAHS seems to be even less of a blood pressure elevator than last time we discussed this matter. Currently I am unaware of any local champion of the cause, which suggests few members have any great missionary zeal for the task, meaning more are likely to want to leave things alone, at least for now.

Mary Matwey received a notable response that in coming from mid-Continent might represent a balanced view point. Gary Heiser from Milan, Michigan says, in a cryptic message, only “if it ain't broke....”, which means I suppose he sees nothing wrong with the present arrangement. None of the other responses to date has suggested change.

So there we stick until more responses come in.

At least there is no resounding negative vote to report, so the best thing seems to table this idea until such time as a national ferment brings this issue to the surface again for closer inspection.

It certainly would be a tidier arrangement if NEHS submerged its distinctions from other chapters so all could contribute to the benefit of NAHS and heather gardeners everywhere, so be assured I will give a sympathetic ear to anyone who wants to spread the gospel either here or in Darkest Africa

More immediate are our responsibilities for tending the heather gardens at Fort Tryon in NYC, Hermitage in Cape Cod, The Fells in NH, and Lasdon Gardens in Westchester County, NY. The pruning date for Fort Tryon has been set for April 11, and for Lasdon Gardens on April 13 and the Heritage Museum heathers is set for April 25. The Fells trimming date will be set when factors of weather and likely attendance are factored in.

Keep tuned to our Website for the latest information.

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Garden Gate Magazine Responds By Editor, Mary Matwey

In the first Heather Notes issue of 2015, Vol. 25 No. 1, I reported on the comments by heather enthusiasts of the NEHS and NAHS to confusing advice on trimming heather which appeared in the Garden Gate feature called "Q&A" section, Issue 121, Feb. 2015. A letter composed by your president, Donald Mackay and myself outlining our reactions to their advice was sent to the Q&A staff of Garden Gate in early January. Not receiving any response by February 1, another letter was sent to the Editor of Garden Gate, Steven Nordmeyer. That appeared to do the trick and since then the magazine Managing Editor, Kristen BeaneSullivan, and Associate Editor Stephanie Peterson, have been in contact with us assuring us that the incorrect advice on trimming Calluna will be addressed. The following are excerpts from their communiques.

From Kristen BeaneSullivan, Managing Editor Garden Gate, February 24, 2015

Ms. Matwey,

Thank you so much for your thoughtful and thorough comments regarding our advice about pruning heather in on February issue. You and your colleagues are right that we inadvertently identified the plants as *Callunas*, rather than *Ericas*. I'm so appreciative that you took the time to point out this error (in such a kind way, no less!) and shared the great information from so many heather enthusiasts around the country.

We'd like to correct this for our readers. We will be sending out new information for our weekly eNote subscribers in the next couple of weeks. In addition, in our next Q&A, we'd like to point out this error and expand the correction into an explanation of the differences between *Erica carnea* and *E. x darleyensis* and *Calluna vulgaris* (and how to prune both).

From Stephanie Petersen, Associate Editor Garden Gate, March 9, 2015

Mary and Donald,

Thank you for your help with pruning information for heather and heath. Attached, you will find a pdf of our e-note (see Featured Plant, pg. 2) that we will be sending to subscribers this week with pruning info. for Calluna. Would you please look it over and get back to me so that we are sure to provide accurate information to our readers? We are also going to run a more detailed correction in the printed issue of Garden Gate 124 in July/Aug. I will follow up again once I have that written.

This is a personal note from the Editor HN and does not represent the opinion of the NEHS or NAHS. The Garden Gate magazine's response to our concerns on their trimming heather advice has been commendable. I recommend this garden magazine to everyone for its beautiful presentation and informative articles but perhaps more important to me is the fact that there are NO ADVERTISEMENTS in the entire publication. How do they do they survive? I don't know but it is a joy to read!

To Everything There Is a Season by Donald Mackay

In a funny way I'm glad the magazine staff (Garden Gate) got calluna and erica mixed up. It's not that they are wrong; in one way they aren't. Had they lived much earlier they would have been if not right, then at least not provably wrong. After all the common heather that grew all over his native Sweden and throughout Europe was *Erica vulgaris* to Carl von Linné, and it wasn't until the 1800's that Salisbury found enough differences between the plants that grew so abundantly on heaths and moorlands throughout northern Europe that he broadened the Linnaean classification to include Calluna. Calluna and several other members of the *Ericaceae* have flowers in four parts rather than the usual five, and this difference sometimes shows up in the leaves.

Calluna, or Scotch Heather as we call it today, has its corolla with four prominent lobes, has four colored enveloping sepals producing most of the color sensation, and has two opposite sets of scale-like leaves clasping the stem instead of the small awl or needle-shaped leaves characteristic of the plants that Botanists continued to call erica. The usually small shrubs in the Erica genus are what gardeners today call heaths, and that single shrub that makes up the Calluna genus is called heather.

The several species of heaths (I'll use Gardening lingo from now on) today still grow around the Mediterranean and do well in the Mediterranean climate of the Pacific Coast, the Atlantic coast of Ireland and southwest England, and on the glacial moraines of the American Atlantic coast called Long Island and Cape Cod, where the Maritime climate is at times Mediterranean, meaning moist, warm and mostly spared from freezing winds.

In contrast heather grew all over Irish and Scottish mountains, the Atlantic coast of Europe especially the northern half into Scandinavia and the sandy expanses of the Rhine and 'Bordeaux estuaries'. There the country is called Les Landes from which the English word lawn derives. Heathers, in fact, can be induced to form lawns by regrowth after burning, by constant cropping or by fanatical obsessive mowing of heather seeds sown on

Continued on page 5

prepared soils. The origin of heath, the place, may be quite different from that of the plants growing on it since the primary sense is that of waste land, giving heathens for people who live on it. However, the heath heather characteristics given so far should provide the clues for the gardening protocols that provide the best conditions for their growth.

In that both grow well on poor soils, poor because lack of nutrients and because of soil acidity, both heaths and heathers can be grown alongside each other in the same beds where climate extremes are not experienced. Both sand and peat form very low nutrient soils, though both are needed for optimal growth, sand providing obviously necessary drainage and less obviously aeration, and peat the acidity and moisture retention needed for the fungal growth that nearly all plants, but particularly heaths and heathers need to form the nutrient scavenging function of the mycorrhizal symbiosis that most *Ericaceae* welcome if not absolutely require.

In general heathers grow further north than heaths. Heathers are found in Iceland, throughout Scandinavia, around the Baltic into Russia, even as far as the Ural Mountains. The ericas, by contrast, like summer climes, and only a few venture northward. *Erica cinerea*, called perversely the Bell Heather, grows well in Scotland's lower mountains, particularly if backed by a rock to reflect the sun, but not on the summits where calluna and blueberries prosper. In Ireland it does very well on the western coast of Galway and Connemara and Mayo, especially on the sandy links golf courses where it forms a mass of purple, sometimes pleasingly mingled with the bright yellow of gorse and broom in June and early July. The common heather, however, doesn't start bloom till later reaching its climax in early September when the second magnificent swathe of color clothes the moors.

Another hint for gardeners here. Plan your garden and beds recognizing that heaths usually bloom earlier, and that heathers - some cultivars anyway - can bloom July through November. Eventually we'll get down to pruning, and this is it. Ericas that bloom in spring form their flower buds in the fall. Callunas don't bud until regrowth starts in April. Some ericas (the winter and spring-blooming heaths, i.e., *Erica carnea* and its hybrid *E. xdarleyensis*) start to form buds in mid-summer, leaving a narrow window for pruning. As a result many heaths are best pruned almost immediately after blooming finishes. Admittedly, this creates a picky problem for some heaths like *E. ciliaris* and *E. tetralix*, and its hybrids (*xwilliamsii*, *xwatsonii*, *xstuartii*) that bloom over a long period and mix new with spent (though still pretty) flowers.

Another important difference between erica and calluna pruning is based on the annual determinate growth habit of calluna in which, unlike many other *Ericaceae*, new growth starts in spring at the end of the stem of the old flower spike. The old flowers eventually fall off, but since no leaves grow there the stem becomes bare and barren of any foliage causing, in some eyes, unsightly leggy growth. For this reason alone calluna should be pruned below the old flower spike before new growth starts in spring.

For some reason this is not much of a problem for the hardy ericas as pruning off the old flowers in erica is mainly for cosmetic reasons, and timed to avoid cutting off the new flower buds that formed in Fall. Know at least that ericas should be pruned by the end of the season and that callunas should be left till spring.

This advice holds for all climes, but factors emerge for those plants alongside the northern Atlantic shore where true Mediterranean conditions are absent. There survival rears its ugly head, where only calluna and the hardy heaths stand a chance of making it to spring. Perhaps surprisingly, even all the way to Canada, persistent snow cover is your greatest friend. Areas where snow melts in warm spells to be followed by bitter Arctic winds and bright sunshine are tough on evergreens where frozen soil leads to desiccation and frost heaving. Even six inches of snow, held in place by evergreen branches of Balsam Fir or White Pine, is an enormous help, and though the protruding stems get brittle and dried out they will have to be pruned off anyway to encourage the growth of multiple shoots that bear the flower buds.

Ericas under insufficient snow will have their own problems as bitter cold easily causes stem splitting and even breakage. The plant survives but grows with extensive blotched areas owing to brittle stems bearing gray desiccated foliage and shrunken decolored blooms. *Erica carnea* from the Austrian and Balkan Alps, holds up best lying prostrate like a ground cover under snow, and is usually very tolerant of cold weather. But too long under the snow results in bleached flowers bereft of their usual majestic purple. Its common hybrid - called *E. xdarleyensis*, and also (like *E. carnea*) Spring or Winter Heath - is particularly susceptible to stem splitting due to its tender parent, *Erica erigena*, which contributes the upright shrubby habit and large size making it hard to hide from winter winds. Where snow is unreliable fabric covers, like burlap or Remay, is needed to keep wind velocities and winter temperatures at tolerable levels.

All heaths and heathers need preparation for winter, or perhaps I should say lack of preparation, in that watering and especially fertilizers should be avoided in the fall as the succulent new growth produced will be especially vulnerable in winter. And since pruning also produces lots of new growth, it should be avoided for all plants, heaths and heathers alike. Save work now and save it for later. Repair of damaged plants is particularly tiresome, and particularly so when you know you were the cause of it.

Walter Wornick - In Memoriam

By Donald Mackay

I have only belatedly learned that Walter Wornick - an early and vigorous supporter of NEHS - died of a heart attack last September. Walter made many contributions to the early issues of Heather Notes, but then as I well know, it was a task almost thrust upon him as Editor until he resigned this post in October 1997. Mary Matwey made an author index of Heather Notes and found 39 entries by Walter, starting from the very first issue in Jan. 1994 and lasting until he resigned.

Walter made many visits to flower shows and overseas trips to attend the UK Heather Society meetings, always writing up each visit in some detail.

He had a certain humorous inclination, which for me was best expressed in his 1997 article called "The Little Brown Dog with the Green Coat" (HN Vol.7 (2) p.6. In this article he recounted his experiences with the USDA and sniffer dogs when bringing in a range of new heather cultivars from England into the US. As I recall he had conscientiously washed all the soil off the roots of the cuttings, which while meeting the strict import standards of the USDA did nothing for the survivability of the cuttings. But you can't blame the Little Brown Dog for that.

Walter lived in Alstead, New Hampshire on top of a hill with a commanding view, but with considerable exposure to winter cold. A heather bed Walter had right on the summit came through an extended drought and period of neglect when he was abroad for months one year. I was there when he returned to inspect the beds and found instead a mass of vigorous weeds. I will not forget the lesson to be learned when among the weeds all his young heathers were not only alive, but prospering.

We also have to thank Walter for initiating our relationship with The Fells in Sunapee, NH, which was not too far from Alstead. He had found out about the naturalized heathers growing there and proposed to start - with Bunny Van Valey's help - a memorial heather garden in honor of Fanny Brokaw - another early member of NEHS. The state of New Hampshire - or some offshoot of it - put paid to that idea but caused NEHS to change its focus to maintenance, meaning weeding and pruning, of the old naturalized heathers already growing there.

Walter had strong feelings on heathers, especially hybrid South African tropical heaths sold at Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, etc. which had no chance of surviving in the garden and which diminished the reputation of heathers as reliable and easy-to-grow plants. That problem is still with us, I'm afraid.

Walter's other passion was collecting glass bottles. I know because in taking over an old deer cabin I also inherited the midden behind it. In trying to make a garden bed of it I uncovered several old bottles, mostly whisky ones, I believe, and was relieved to find in Walter someone who would gladly take them off my hands. I never got any heather to grow there - too much broken glass and rusty cans - but it afforded me some comfort to find a happy home for these Vermont archaeological treasures.

Memories are built on strange beginnings.

Ave atque vale Walter

The White Stuff

By Mary Matwey

It has been a winter like none that I can remember since I started getting serious about gardening and especially heather gardening. Last year the lack of snow on old heather plantings along with warm then frigid weather were the big concerns. This year we've had a lot of snow cover at a time when the temperature barely topped out over 20°. I am not a skier of slopes or cross-country but I took great joy in the deep snow because of the heather treasures lying protected under the white blanket. March is nearly half over, the sun is rising earlier and setting later and passing more directly overhead each day. The Arctic Vortex has finally begun its swing northward and the Red-Winged Blackbirds, Grackles and Starlings are landing in huge flocks on any exposed ground to pick it clean of..... what I don't know. Yesterday I estimated that 25% of the yard, lawn and garden beds were free of snow but this morning I woke to heavy lake effect snow squalls that covered everything with at least 3" of "the white stuff". Will spring ever take hold or are we just going to move right into summer? Please jot down your winter experiences as the next issue of HN (July) will feature the Regional Reports.

It's Been a Tough Winter.....

We Hope These Pictures of Kurt Kramer's Gardens Raise Your Spirits



Kurt Kramer is a renowned breeder of heathers. He started his company, Heidezüchtung in Edewecht, Germany forty years ago.

He developed the well-known Erica x darleyensis, 'Kramer's Rote' in the 1980's.



Gardengirls is Kurt Kramers premium brand of winter hardy Calluna vulgaris bud-bloomers. The range includes about 40 varieties

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

NORTHEAST HEATHER SOCIETY website: 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:

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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

