



President's Report

It has taken much effort on the part of your Secretary and much expenditure of paper and computer manipulation to come up with the electronic ballot form included with this issue of Heather Notes. As a minimum, therefore, your effort to complete the balloting process can be viewed as an approval and appreciation of Mary Matwey's hard work.

Unfortunately, I have just discovered that being in the middle of a two-year term my name is not on the ballot, depriving you of the proletariat's right to rise up in protest and hound me out of office. So wait till next year and meanwhile suffer my nagging insistence that we do something to show we are alive as a society and that concerted effort by all will result in vastly increased membership and an incentive to grow and sell heathers.

I regret to report that an informal survey of nurseries, at least in the Eastern half of the nation, shows a decrease in heather offerings, due (as the nurseries promptly and reasonably point out) to a decrease in demand.

The large eastern nurseries, it seems to me, are giving up on producing heathers and instead relying on imports from Canada, or stocking by a few large wholesalers who supply heathers according to the season, according to their state of bloom and immediate attractiveness to nursery visitors. If you don't time your visit properly, the heather you desire may have been returned to the wholesaler and replaced by something in flower, a plant perhaps of little interest to you.

We should thank our stars for the mail order services of nurseries like **Hickory Hill Heath and Heather** and **Heaths and Heathers**, although mail order plants put considerable strain on cost and size and the ability of soil mixes to stand up to rough handling. Someone should start a business of direct selling to gardeners of rooted cuttings, which are much easier to ship by mail.

We can't grow as a society unless we start to grow our own heathers and make them available, especially to new members. Think about it and go out and start some cuttings now. We will all benefit from it.

Donald Mackay

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Please Vote

Your 2016-2017 NEHS Officer Ballot is an insert located in the middle of this issue of **Heather Notes**.

I'm sure that you'll recognize the names of these dedicated people who volunteer so much time to NEHS.

You have two options:

-Check your selection on the ballot, fold the ballot, affix postage, and mail.

-Send an email indicating your selection to Peter Matwey. His email address is :

pmatwey@stny.rr.com

Thanks for
your support!!

Bridging the Seasons

The Lee Valley Gardening Newsletter this month has an article called "Bridging the Seasons with Heaths and Heathers. The link is:

www.leevalley.com/US/newsletter/Gardening/1552/Article2.htm

Click on Newsletter from the drop down menu on the left and then select the newsletter Vol. 10 #9. It is very informative

Featured Plant: *Calluna vulgaris*

E.F. Brown

Height: 25cm or 10”

Spread: 45cm or 18”

Pale lavender flowers, blooms September thru December, with mid green foliage.

It is upright in growth habit and is a late blooming cultivar.

In the Heather bed it is very showy when paired with yellow foliated heathers that do not turn orange or red with the cold like C.v. ‘Gold Haze’.



Now's the Time to Start Thinking About Winter Protection for the Heather By Mary Matwey

If you are avoiding the issue or undecided about the need for winter protection of your heather read what heather growers of 22 years ago have to say on the subject. The following is a summary of answers to a survey compiled by Will Clarke and published in the Heather Notes Vol. 3 & 4 in 1993.

Question: Do you provide winter protection for your heather bed?

The majority of answers to this question were YES. The degree of protection depended on site exposure to the elements, the age and height of the heather plants. South facing slopes need protection from the burning winter sun. If your site has no westerly wind break erect some type of barrier to protect against desiccating westerly winds. Tall plants will generally exhibit burned tips from winter wind and sun and can be protected with boughs, leaves or loosely woven materials. The key is to use a covering that will allow moisture to penetrate to the plants below. Man-made material coverings range from camo covers, remay and believe it or not, plastic. Plastic covering was used by an accomplished nurseryman to protect his inventory during winter up until a few years ago when he left the business and moved south.

Question: When do you remove the protection?

Removal of winter protection is a judgment call and depends on local weather. Removing protection too early may cause the plants to freeze with late frosts.

Question: Do anti-desiccant sprays work well on heather to prevent moisture loss?

Anti-desiccants gave limited positive protection results. Cost may be the prohibiting factor for a large heather planting.

Question: What heather plant is the best/worst winter survivor in your garden?

Erica carnea was considered the best winter survivor except in extreme exposed sites followed by *Erica tetralix*. Erica species such as x darleyensis, cinerea, watsonii, vagans are subject to stem splitting. Dwarf and low growing Calluna have little tolerance for harsh winters. The "old Calluna cultivars" do well with minimal winter protection.

Question: When do you apply winter protection?

Some growers protect after the ground freezes while some say to protect when you are able to find materials and the time to do it at the onset of winter. A crucial element here is that the heather bed has sufficient moisture at the time of covering.

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Correcting Pruning Information in Garden Gate

By Mary Matwey

A note from Stephanie Petersen of Garden Gate magazine:

“It was nice to work with you on this topic. Now I know where to turn if I have a question about heath or heather in the future.”

Stephanie has been most helpful in working with NEHS, myself and Donald Mackay, to correct the heather trimming information that appeared in the magazine’s Q&A section of the February 2015, Issue 121. The magazine has provided us with the “correction article” as it appeared in Garden Gate magazine and is allowing us to publish it in this issue of the Heather Notes. See adjacent article

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Caroline Alexander
Northeast Harbor, ME

Dr. Frank Kirk
Binghamton, NY

**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

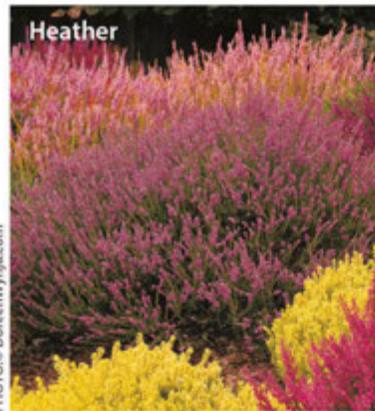
As published in Issue 124 (July/August 2015)

Garden Gate[®] MAGAZINE

CORRECTION: How to prune heather and winter heath

In issue 121, we gave some incorrect information regarding pruning heather and winter heath. Here’s what you need to know to keep your plants looking great:

While heather and winter heath look similar and are both in the same family, they bloom at different times and require different pruning techniques. These evergreen shrubs grow best in moist, well-drained soil and have pink, magenta, purple or white flowers.



Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) blooms on new growth from midsummer to fall. It has scalelike foliage and some cultivars turn red in fall and winter. Then in spring, new growth forms on the stem above the previous year’s spent flowers, leaving bare spots where those seedheads fall off. Shape and prune plants in late winter to early spring to create a rounded form and keep them from looking leggy. The upper right photo shows where to make the cuts. One easy way to do this is to grab a handful of branches about $\frac{3}{4}$ up from the base and use pruners to remove the spent flower tips at that point.



Winter heath (*Erica carnea* and hybrids), in the photos above, has needlelike foliage and blooms in late winter to spring. Prune winter heaths immediately after the flowers have faded in late spring, using hedge shears to give it a light trim around the edges and on top. If you wait until fall to do this, you’ll cut off most of next year’s flowers.

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Mrs. Beale Alive and Well in 1974

by Donald Mackay

While clearing out old files I came across the auction notice sent out when Walter Kolaga's Mayfair Nurseries in Windham Township, PA (not too far from Nichols, NY) went out of business. This was a specialist nursery, featuring dwarf and semi-dwarf rock garden plants. Walter's book on rock gardening¹ is a classic and I highly recommend it if only for the treatment of heaths and heathers.

He grew tens of thousands of heathers in all pot sizes and the entire stock was being liquidated. There were 26 callunas and 19 ericas on the list. If popularity can be judged by the number of plants he had available, then *Calluna vulgaris* 'Rigida', with 1850 plants on offer was the winner, closely followed by 'Tib' and 'Hirsuta'. Then came 'Bradford', his own creation, then 'Juno' and 'Sister Anne'.

Then came 1150 plants of the first double, labelled 'Mrs. H.E. Beale', in a very wide range of sizes. Close behind was *C. vulgaris* 'Plena', then 'Martha Hermann', a nose ahead of 'County Wicklow', the third double and 'Aureifolia', the first and perhaps only yellow-foliaged heather listed. At the bottom were two more doubles, 'Else Frye' and 'J.H. Hamilton', sandwiching 'Foxii Nana'.

If only I could go back in time and look at his plants of *C. vulgaris* 'Mrs. H.E. Beale', Were they hairy as I suspect, and had the improved version being sold in the UK as 'H.E. Beale' already lost its hair in spite of, or because of, picking up some male hormones?

1974 is very late for 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' still being around, even in North America, for Maxwell and Beale, the UK nursery that introduced 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' in about 1930, had changed the name to Mr. Beale by the mid-30's, apparently due to marital difficulties. It should be noted that H.E. Beale was a director of the nursery.

I wish I could find the exact dates for the selling of 'Mrs. H.E. Beale'. Only the nursery would know for sure. Possibly 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' was being sold as early as 1926, one year after its discovery. In writing 'Will the Real Mrs. Beale Please Stand Up' (*Heather Notes*, 2013. 23(3) pp.4-6). I referred to all heather books ever written, but could find no dates, only a number of alternate names of so-called improvements like 'H.E. Beale Underwood's Variety', 'Pink Beale' and 'Peter Sparkes'. As expected, Kolaga's book published in 1966 lists 'Mrs. H.E. Beale'.

The name 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' apparently disappeared from English nursery catalogs, so it is interesting to find 1150 plants of 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' being offered for sale in America as late as 1974, a date that predates the formation of all heather societies in North America. Heathers were obviously a matter of interest, but it seems the target customers at that time were rock gardeners and others interested in dwarf plants.

The thought that 1150 plants of Mrs. H.E. Beale' were let loose in 1974 must be very unsettling to purists who believe one plant deserves only one name. The thought that the earlier name might belong to the original but now different plant might be even more disquieting. But the thought that only here in North America is surviving the true original double found in the New Forest almost ninety years ago is to my mind rather pleasing and not upsetting at all.

Kolaga was not the only nursery selling *Calluna vulgaris* 'Mrs. H.E. Beale'. The Rock Garden, Litchfield, ME, another specialist rock garden supplier, put out a catalog in 1977 containing quite a number of both ericas and callunas. Perhaps for this reason Marjorie Walsh, the owner, became one of the founding members of NEHS. I wish she was still around to answer questions about her sources, but there is no doubt she was offering 'Mrs. H.E. Beale' at about the same time as Mayfair Nurseries. Remember these nurseries were operating before the NEHS and NAHS were founded and were serving the rock garden business. White Flower Farm, a large Connecticut nursery offering heathers, was selling 'H.E. Beale' in their 1975 catalog, but I believe their stock was supplied by Jim Cross of Environmentals Nursery in Cutchogue on Long Island.

Who of you reading this bought any plants from Mayfair Nursery or The Rock Garden 40 years ago? 'H.E. Beale' is long-lived and just perhaps could still be there in some neglected part of the garden. Not, of course, that any part of your garden is ever neglected.

¹Kolaga, W.A. 1966. *All about rock gardens and plants*. New York, Avenel.

Summer report on Heathers: 8-28-15, Lasdon Park Arboretum, Katoneh, NY

By Donald Mackay

First impression was good but some colors were muted, perhaps because of long-lasting drought, although the bed gets some benefit from lawn spraying close by. Old section looked much better than the new section where many plants have yet to establish.

Old section needed little weeding or attention other than removal of invading pachysandra. We removed hundreds of bulbs from the new section. A few plants in the new section with lopsided growth and dead foliage were layered after pruning. Conversation with staff members reported much visitor interest in the heathers and following our recommendation, they will request some good quality mulch to spread over both beds.

P.S. *Erica carnea* 'Westwood Yellow' is spreading beautifully but running into neighbors.

Failure to Thrive by Mary Matwey

Regarding the report on the Heather bed at Lasdon, Donald Mackay states that some heathers in the new section of plants are not thriving. I helped plant this section of the Lasdon heather bed in June of 2014. As I recall the soil was fairly decent and we worked in compost and/or peat to the planting holes followed by a good watering. The staff at Lasdon was instructed to water the new plants on a weekly basis which I'm confident they did for the remainder of the 2014 growing season. Then came the unusually cold winter of 2014/2015 which tested the principle "survival of the fittest" to the extreme for these new plants. If they survived that winter one could assume that they were hardy enough to put on the normal spring growth and flourish. Donald could just as well be describing the Town of Chenango or Town of Dickenson heather beds here in Binghamton, NY where the same situation for new plants exists. So what is the problem? Consider some possible causes:

- Soil pathogens and soil conditions (texture/drainage/pH)

A soil pathogen is unlikely the cause if not all plants in the area are showing the same stress. Nor could soil texture and drainage be the cause of the stress since any proficient heather gardener would provide the correct soil conditions amending as needed for the heather.

- Weather (cold/heat, too much moisture/too little moisture)

Extremes of weather can be eliminated because we are talking of plants that survived the 2014/2015 winter and the spring and summer of 2015 provided enough moisture to support the heathers new growth and flowering. The dry spell of late (most of September) came after most of the heathers would have put on new growth and flowered and therefore had little impact on the non-flourishing plants.

- Condition of plants at time of planting.

All of the flourishing and non-flourishing heather came from the same source by way of a stop-over at my garden where many were repotted from small 2 ½ " cells into 4" pots. The potting soil was a blend of BX Mix, sand and peat with a little nutrients. If any circumstance is to be singled out as the cause of non-flourishing I would pick the condition of the transplants. I really feel they were not ready to be put in the ground as they had not established a root mass large enough to handle the fluctuations in their environment. I'm sure some heather experts would disagree with me citing how cuttings plunked into the ground under the shade and protection of the mother plant will root and flourish. Having never had success with this method, I consider those who have as gifted. The lesson I've learned is, you get what you pay for and the extra cost of one established heather plant is worth all the freebies you can handle. That is of course unless you have the time and patience to spare.



Photo of Heather bed after initial planting in the Town of Chenango in July 2014



Photo of Heather bed in the Town of Chenango in September 2015

Plants on the right have hardly grown after a year in the ground, while some heather in the foreground have flourished.

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, Milton, DE. Tel. (603) 903-3017; 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

