



About Bill Dowley

By Mary Matwey, Editor

The new president of the Northeast Heather Society, Bill Dowley, is not a novice when it comes to heather.



Bill has been a member of the NEHS for 20 years, serving as Vice-President, and Garden liaison. As Garden Liaison Bill was a key figure in getting the Society involved with the Heather bed at Fort Tryon Park in Manhattan, NY. Since the spring of 2002, this involvement includes yearly spring trimming of the heathers and most recently a free, heather propagation workshop. Bill setup and ran the workshop for visitors to the park on "The Shearing of the Heathers" day which was a tremendous

success and Bill has been asked to repeat the workshop this year. As Bill helped the young and not so young to prep and stick the heather cuttings in a pot full of his "magic soil" you could just see his enthusiasm flowing into the crowd who waited patiently for their turn at propagating.

Bill formed the New England Heath and Heather nursery in 2003 which he ran from his New Hampshire home. He and his lovely wife, Vicki, turned their home into a B&B for fellow NEHS members who traveled north to trim the Heathers at The Fells in Newbury, NH. Ever ready to take advantage of free labor, Bill would put us to work potting up, rearranging, weeding and trimming heather in the nursery. Our reward was fond memories of good food, lots of wine & cheese, much laughter and camaraderie plus there was always some unknown, overgrown, surplus heather variety that Bill generously shared with the work crew for no cost or ridiculously low prices. Bill was and still is a champion at providing heather to the NEHS supported gardens.

He and Vicki have since moved from the frigid winters of NH to sunny, mild Delaware. His propagation success with heathers has not diminished with a change in climate as the last telephone call to me was asking advice on how to protect 200+ new plants while he was away on a trip to Australia.

NEHS members in the Mid-Atlantic area (DE, PA, OH, NC, NJ, NY, VI, WV) now have a new source for advice on heather growing problems in Bill Dowley who now shares the same climatic conditions (warm/hot and humid.

Welcome, Bill

In This Issue

About Bill Dowley.....	pg 1
Tribute.....	pg 1
NEHS Website.....	pg 1
Welcome New Members.....	pg 2
Third Time's The Charm.....	pg 2
Mt. Desert Heather.....	pg 3
Dreams of Heather.....	pg 4
President's Message.....	pg 5
P P & P Demise.....	pg 5
To Growers of H. E. Beale.....	pg 6
NEHS Election Results.....	pg 6
Calendar of Events.....	pg 6
Fishing With Peanuts.....	pg 7

Tribute to Ralph Doyle



The Northeast Heather Society family lost a dear friend when Ralph Doyle, husband of Judy Doyle, passed away in late December. We will miss his "un-heathered" viewpoints.

<●><●><●><●><●> Northeast Heather Society Website <●><●><●><●>

Watch for a new look, friendlier searches on our website and more compatibility with search engines of the new smart phones, tablets and PCs. ***It's hard to believe that in a 7 year period the world of web design has changed so much as to make the original NEHS website obsolete and non-compliant with today's industry standards.***

Third Time's The Charm (maybe) by Frank Kirk

After Thanksgiving, I ran into Pete Matwey at Cutler Gardens, wished him a Happy Holiday season and ask if he could he tell Mary that I have roots on my heather starts. A week later, Mary called me and asked how did I know I had roots. So here's the story.

I had two unsuccessful attempts to grow heather starts this year. All 200 cuttings from the Fort Tryon shearing died and 70 cuttings in my first Forsythe pot died. Not to be deterred, I started a pair of Forsythe pots this fall. One was started in early September and the other in early October. I planted approximately 80 starts of 14 different heather varieties. The pots were kept covered and placed in a screened in porch with west exposure to sunlight. They were kept in the porch because hungry chipmunks added to the demise of the previous Forsythe pot. The soil was a mixture of peat moss and pulverized perlite. Cuttings were taken from the top of the shoots with the flowers removed.

Thanks to the warm fall we've all enjoyed, the pots were kept outside until mid November. Since then they have been inside near a southeast-facing window. Following Jane and Paul Murphy's technique described in the summer HEATHER NOTES, I added small LED grow lights above each pot. These are AptoYu 7W lights with 5 red wavelength and 2 blue wavelength bulbs. I found them on Amazon for \$17 each.

So, back to the question of how did I know I had roots? Around the second week of December, I noticed some sludge in the bottom of the center clay pots and took them out for cleaning. The soil stayed in place because it was wet. I notice very fine hair like roots growing toward the now missing clay pots. These were more numerous around the cuttings that appeared to growing slightly. I have added some pictures of the pot setup as well as the root growth.



So, hopefully, my third attempt at heather starts will return some success. As of December 18th, 20 cutting have died but some are showing clear signs of growth. For now, I keep the starts covered with the plastic bags. I do uncover them occasionally to get fresh air to the starts and give a weekly spray of Green Cure, an organic fungicide recommended by Mary Matwey.

After my discussion with Mary, I plan to keep the starts as they are in the Forsythe pots until spring. If they continue to survive and grow large enough, Mary says she will help me separate them into individual pots. I am pleased to have them survive this long and take root, but as Mary has reminded me, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch."

Welcome New Members:

Lela Fitzpatrick - Vermont
Elaine Stackhouse - Michigan

Janet McIntyre - Maine
Debra Hartzell - Maryland

Report on Mt. Desert Island Heather by Donald Mackay

On Sept. 29, 2016 a visit was made to the site of the previously reported (*Heather News* 2014. 37(4): 10) solitary plant of *Calluna vulgaris* on the Hadlock Brook Trail in Acadia National Park. Whereas on previous occasions a hiker could have easily overlooked a small shrub growing out of a crack in a granite cliff, on this occasion a hiker would have to sidestep a large shrub protruding into the trail.

The heather has grown into a shrub two feet high and four feet across. As on previous visits there were no flowers to indicate the color, but there were perhaps half-a-dozen faded flowers on two stems. Not much, but an improvement on previous visits. There is a small clearing in the trees above, allowing some sun to reach the heather, but a profusion of upward-reaching rather spindly but well-leaved heather stems reaching for the sky indicated a light-starved area.



Probably accounting for the remarkable increase in size was the amount of decomposed plant debris trapped among the branches, making an almost peaty soil heaped up against the face of the overhanging ledge. The soil was rather dry, as was almost everything in New England at that time, perhaps accounting for the sparseness of foliage on the lower branches, the tips of which, however, showed fresh green growth.

Time and distance precluded a visit to the other adventitious heather growing on the far side of Acadia Mountain, but it is to be hoped it is doing as well as this one as an understory shrub.

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NEHS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS, 2017				
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Bill Dowley

Dreams of Heather

KEENE |
NEW HAMPSHIRE

BILL DOWLEY had a plan. Or rather, he had a dream. And he set about developing a plan designed to make the dream come true.

"I've been an avid golfer for years, and I was trying to figure out a business plan where I could combine the ability to play golf and sell something to golf courses," he said.

Pair that goal with his day job of representing a British textile mill in the United States, a business that required regular trips to Scotland, and he had it: heather. Think of Scotland, think of heather. Think of Scottish golf courses, think of heather.

"Golfers like to think of themselves as Scottish in nature, very traditional," Dowley said.

Dowley joined the British Heather Society. He spent time across the pond with a heather propagator. He learned about the differences between heather, *Calluna vulgaris*, and heath, *Erica* spp. They are both from the Ericaceae family, which also includes rhododendrons, azaleas and blueberries. He brought back cuttings from the UK.

Now he has a small propagation house, and this winter he probably had 20,000 plants protected outside in four-inch and one-gallon pots.

"They require two years on a full cycle before you can sell them," he said. "It's a very slow growing plant initially, but once it gets to two years old, it doubles in size each of the next three years until it gets to maturity after three years in the ground."

Dowley is an officer in the North American Heather Society and its Northeast Heather Society chapter. The organization makes appearances at the Society Row event held by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in May, at the Tower Hill Botanic Garden plant sale in June, and at the Highland Games celebration of all things Scottish in New Hampshire each September. He has about 20 wholesale accounts, most of them garden centers, spread throughout New England.

He holds heather discussions at garden centers, too.

"He really knows his stuff," said Matthew deWolf, perennial manager at the 4 Seasons Garden Center in Williston, Vt. "He'll give people some ideas of what can be done with heather."

Dowley will talk about heather's many varieties and its changing colors; how it can bloom from June through November, depending on the variety; how well it handles acidic soil, and — with decent snow cover — how well it handles winter. Evergreen bows are often used to protect them.

He may even talk about how to make good use of heather on a golf course. The odd thing is, though Dowley has gotten himself hip-deep in heather through the years — "Right now it's a second business that I run; I hate to call it a hobby because it takes so much work" — a market for it has not developed with golf courses. But don't count him out just yet.

"It never did end up coming full circle," he said. "But who knows?" — *Allen Lessels*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BILL DOWLEY

"I hate to call it a hobby because it takes so much work."



Heather, which can thrive in acidic soil and handle the chill of winter, is a natural for Northeast landscapes.

Bill's Basics

- "The first thing to do is to join the Northeast Heather Society (www.northamericanheathersoc.org). It will give you all the help you need."
- "Heather wants a sunny location with well-drained soil. It needs about four to five hours of full sun or partial sun each day."
- "There are probably 20 to 30 varieties that are common to New England over the past 15 to 20 years. Some of those that have done the best are 'Tib,' 'Kinlochruel,' 'Peter Sparkes' and 'H.E. Beale.'"

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 COLUMN by Bill Dowley, Milton, DE

I am writing my first President's Letter in mid-January and the temperature today reached 70 F after just having had a storm dump 6 - 8 inches of snow several days ago. One of the issues in moving from New Hampshire to Delaware has been how the heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is going to handle the weather. At the present time, of the 125 or so Callunas which we planted in about 1000 sq. ft. of heather beds, about 40 have died. I feel quite certain that accounting for all the plants I killed in NH trying to nurse them through severe winters and the plants which will probably die here because of the warm winter temperature swings, I will become the President of the Society who has killed the most heather plants. At the present time, I have about 200 plants which I propagated last winter in an unheated shed with a grow light and a 2' x 4' bottom heat mat. I have covered them with leaves and put them on the north side of a stone wall in hopes they will survive the winter. As of today, they certainly look to be doing quite well but will only feel comfortable that I didn't kill these plants if they make it till the Ides of March.

Last spring after our annual Ft. Tryon heather shearing, we invited New Yorkers who were watching us to try their own hand in propagating heather. A 4" x 4" pot, some potting soil, a plastic bag, a rubber band and hormone powder was all we offered them and they went out and picked up cuttings they wanted to plant. Afterwards, I went out and took a number of cuttings from a very nice looking Erica which I believe is *Erica x darleyensis* 'Kramer's Rote'. I did exactly as our instructions to the NY'ers - put it in a shady spot and don't open it for 3 months. Of the 6 pots I planted, all had small Erica's which had rooted. I have transplanted one of the pots as a whole into a 2 gallon pot and the plant today is about the size of a volleyball. I am sorry I did not spend a few more minutes and do the same test with some Calluna cuttings. I can assure you when we hold our Rooting Class on April 8 at Ft. Tryon, I will leave there with several 4" pots of some of the nice Callunas which are growing in Manhattan just north of the George Washington Bridge. I would invite everyone within driving distance to join us on April 8th on Scottish Clan Weekend in NYC.

Clearly there are times we try to make the problem of propagating heather plants much more difficult than it really needs to be. Michael Dirr wrote the book "The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation" about 10 years ago and is pretty much referred to as the Bible when it comes to propagation. In the section on *Calluna vulgaris* propagation from cuttings, his first line states "About as many ways to root heather as months in the year". I will try a number of new methods over the course of the next year or two to see if I can find a fool proof method of rooting cuttings. I look forward to reading articles written for this issue on growing the new plants on. With the small nursery in NH, we sold a large number of plants over the years. We planted very few of these same plants. So far, looking at the success we have had in growing plants on in Delaware, I would grade my efforts as a C-;

I need help.

PP&P Magazine Ceases Publication by Editor Mary Matwey

Attempts to secure permission to reprint the article on Bill Dowley (page 4), entrepreneur and heather aficionado, which appeared in the summer issue of People, Places & Plants magazine uncovered a sad situation. The following is excerpted from Wikipedia website:

"People, Places & Plants magazine was founded in late 1995^[3] and the magazine's first issue was published in January 1996. The magazine was headquartered in [Falmouth, Maine](#).^[4] By late 1997, the magazine was the top-selling garden magazine in Maine.^[5] People, Places & Plants published its 50th issue, billed also as a special 10th anniversary issue, in May 2005. During late 2008 and 2009 issues of PPP were sporadic. The spring 2009 issue was the last one mailed to subscribers. By June, 2010, the PPP website was offline and the magazine officially ceased publication and the offices closed."

However the article is well written and gives us a glimpse into the beginnings of Bill's "affliction" with heathers.

To Growers of *Calluna vulgaris* 'H. E. Beale' by Donald Mackay

Dr. Charles Nelson, in the Spring 2016 issue of the *Bulletin of the Heather Society*, made the following appeal to growers of 'H. E. Beale':

"Do you grow 'H. E. Beale', the double, pink-flowered *Calluna* first released in 1929? If you have one or more plants, I would like to have a few small specimens (such as side shoots an inch or so long) from each plant to examine. I do not need flowers, fresh or otherwise, *only foliage*. I would especially like material from *old*, long-established plants. Pop the specimens in a small envelope and post to me - you do not need to use a plastic bag or wrap them in moist paper or cling film (they will not be used to make cuttings). If you know where you obtained the original plant, please also let me know."

The background to this appeal is the uncertainty of the name of the plant previously sold as 'H. E. Beale', or now being sold under that name. That is why the age of the plant, and its source, are important factors in clarifying the confusion. It is possible this confusion exists on both side of the Atlantic, or it may be solely an American problem. Dr. Nelson has yet to issue an opinion but informally he has indicated there may be two forms of 'H. E. Beale' growing in America.

This question of identity has been further confused by the use of the invalid name 'Mrs. H. E. Beale', mostly on this side of the Atlantic, and by the variable presence of a slight hairiness on some samples of 'H. E. Beale, and by the creation of named cultivars in the 'H. E. Beale' family tree (like *Calluna vulgaris* 'Peter Sparkes') some of which may not be sufficiently different to merit separate names.

With your cooperation in Charles Nelson's effort we may get to the bottom of this. So go out in the garden now and clip a few sprigs to send to him. Yes I know, it gets dark early, but a good flashlight will suffice. Better now than waiting for spring.

Address:

Dr. Charles Nelson, Tippitiwitchet Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 8PE UK

2016 NEHS Election Results

Thank you to all who voted for passing the changes to the NEHS Bylaws which allow the Society more flexibility in the newsletter and Annual Meeting. You also elected the new Society officers and directors for a 2yr term 2017-2018 except as noted.

	Bill Dowley	President
	Donald Mackay	Vice President
	Mary Matwey	Recording Secretary
For a 1yr term:	Peter Matwey	Treasurer & Corresponding Secretary
	Jane Murphy	Director
	Paul Murphy	Director
	Alice Schaefer	Director
	Frank Kirk	Director

Calendar of Events

Trimming Heathers 2017

Fort TryonApril 8, 9:30 AM Manhattan, NY Plus Propagation Workshop

Heritage April 22, 9:30 AM Sandwich ,MA

The Fells May 13, 9:30 AM Newbury, NH

Fishing with Peanuts By Donald Mackay

While searching for naturalized heather in Maine I paid two visits to the home of Jan and Tom McIntyre on Mt. Desert Island, the second time accompanied by soon-to-be NEHS President Bill Dowley to answer the searching questions posed by Jan, the architect, planner and keeper of an exquisite hillside garden full of highly contrasting heaths and heathers.



Jan had chided me in a long-ago email asking why I was spending time tramping the hills of Acadia National Park in search of wild heather when she had a garden full of tame ones. That time the communication link was lost, but not this time, with my getting in touch just before they were leaving for Canada.

Communication is highly necessary since the McIntyres live on the north coast of the island, fairly close to the shore with its amazing Zone 6B rating (just up from last year's Zone 5), but protected behind a maze of private roads and driveways that would cause any GPS system to implode. However, armed with Jan's very specific directions, I penetrated the maze to find a log cabin in a clearing of dense woods sitting above a 90' x 30' slope in full sun. This was bedecked with a few older heathers from Rock Spray Nursery, and many new ones from Karla

Lortz of Heaths & Heathers. Jan is highly satisfied with Karla's advice and her heathers which, in spite of the coast to coast journey, have always arrived in perfect condition, with root balls intact in spite of their bone-shaking journey on the MDI gravel roads.

In spite of its location, the McIntyre garden is on the itinerary of several garden clubs since Jan has a wide range of garden interests, though heather is clearly the major one. She has prepared a highly detailed map of the heather garden, and has created an enchiridion of heather sprigs taped to separate pages with pertinent information. I wish I had the tenacity of purpose to make such a record book of my own garden, but I console myself with thoughts of a superior memory that once knew the Atomic Numbers and Molecular Weights of all (well most of) the elements.

Bill Dowley has said he will write up a garden report, including I hope some description of the *Calluna vulgaris* 'Tib' there which does show some resemblance to the large and small 'Tib' plants he contributed to the Lasdon Park heather garden. But I must add my appreciation of the several cultivars of *Erica vagans*, which because of the lateness of the season contributed greatly to the overall floral effect. Jan gets some stem breakage (in *Erica cinerea*, too) but the plants recover in spite of it.

Another garden feature was a series of tiny pathways that ducked in and out of the heathers. These are caused by chipmunks, a rodent family of three I was told, who do not damage but respond when called. Hard to believe, but Jan's chirping produced one in seconds. Maybe it was the peanut (with shell) she held in her hand that the chipmunk took from her fingers, then another, then another, then two more until the chipmunk grew cheeks with symptoms of the worst toothache imaginable. Jan says they do not eat them but store them for the winter. The Good News must have spread for it became hard to walk without chipmunks tangled underfeet.

Tom McIntyre takes a good-natured interest in chipmunks, although he has to use wire netting to keep them out of his workshop. He says he can catch them easily if he wanted to. Just tie a peanut to the end of a fishing line, cast the bait, and reel them in. Animal lovers relax, there is no barbed hook. Tom says once they get hold of a peanut they will never let go, even when fully reeled in.

So don't feed all your peanuts to the elephants. Save a few for fishing chipmunks. Their memory may not be long term, but short term it makes it easy to have your own colony of heather dwellers, and perhaps heather lovers, too.



HEATHER NOTES, all rights reserved, is published 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 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.

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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:

January 20—June 20—September 20

