# American Horticulturist

A Publication of the American Horticultural Society

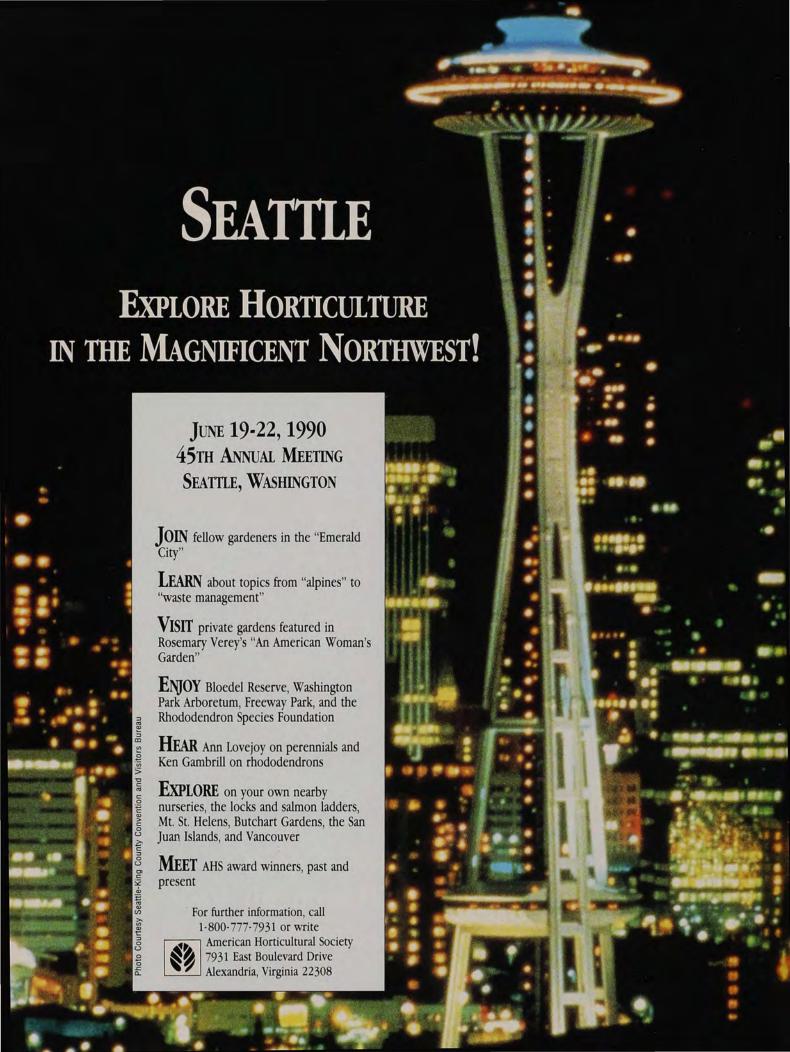
April 1990

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A Rhododendron Retreat
Lilacs: Old-Fashioned, Thoroughly Modern
Betty Miller's Fantastic Four Acres

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# American Horticulturist

Volume 69, Number 4

April 1990

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#### APRIL'S COVER

Photographed by Harold Greer

Seattle, where the American Horticultural Society will hold its Annual Meeting June 19-22, is known for its gorgeous rhododendrons. One of the most stunning purples is 'Colonel Coen', introduced in 1958 by Seattle hybridizer Endre Ostbo, who died that same year. It is only now becoming more widely available.

EDITOR: Kathleen Fisher, ASSISTANT EDITORS: Peggy Lytton, Mary Beth Wiesner, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Martha Palermo, DESIGN DIRECTOR: Ellen Cohen, MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR: Kathleen B. Amberger, ADVERTISING: American Horticultural Society Advertising Department, 80 South Early Street, Alexandria, VA 22304, telephone (703) 823-6966. COLOR SEPARATIONS: Chroma-Graphics, Inc. EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD: Dr. Gerald S. Barad, Flemington, NJ; Dr. Harrison Flint, West Lafayette, IN; Peter Loewer, Cochecton Center, NY; Dr. Elizabeth McClintock, San Francisco, CA; Frederick McGourty, Norfolk, CT; Janet M. Poor, Winnetka, IL; Maire Simington, Phoenix, AZ; Jane Steffey, Sykesville, MD; Dr. James E. Swasey, Newark, DE; Philip E. Chandler, Santa Monica, CA.

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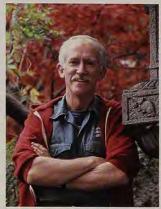
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# Commentary

It's a sunny January Sunday morning in Houston. Church bells are ringing and I have completed what is to me an act of worship: upon arriving here yesterday, not even the headwind of jetlag could have stopped me from finding the nearest garden center and picking up pots of seasonal flowering plants for my hosts. A holiday deep freeze has left completely browned palms and cycads and the gardening community has its pruning tools drawn, awaiting the signal from local experts that what is actually dead can be trimmed without danger of spurring new



growth too soon or removed without fear of discarding something that might have recovered. I saw the need for a spot of color to affirm that the path to spring has a way of leading first through winter. Three 'Tempo' gerberas in four-inch pots fit perfectly in a twelve-inch clay saucer, for an instant garden that can be watered efficiently. Another saucer garden was made of a half dozen ranunculus and polyanthus primroses in three-inch-square pots.

But I have another task this morning: to get you—yes, you!—to join all of us who will be attending this year's Annual Meeting of the American Horticultural Society June 19-22 in Seattle. You have all spring to get ready. Attending an Annual Meeting of AHS in Boston thirty-six years ago when I was a teenager literally set the course of my life as a gardening journalist. Last year's Annual Meeting in Minnesota's Twin Cities reminded me all over again of the sheer pleasure and inspiration of being with others whose lives reveal unconditional love and respect for the natural world. Fellow AHS Board Member Jean Woodhull said it in a few words: "You may not know it, but you live in a garden—the earth."

Attending this year's meeting will give you a fresh perspective. Our hosts, led by Betty Miller and Glen Youell, have lined up a program that never lets up. We tackle the broad issue first—the relevance of gardeners and gardening to that complicated array of interrelationships known as the environment—and then move on to more specialized aspects of land-scaping and planting, through lectures by some of the region's finest in those fields, followed by deliciously long afternoons and evenings visiting Seattle's most fabled gardens and dining in the company of friends from near and far.

Those who attend the meeting will come from all over North America and beyond. We will be young and old and in-between, amateur and professional. There is no more diverse get-together scheduled this year in all of horticulture. Come join us. We are a family. If you are young, this is your opportunity to sit with wise and loving elders. If you are old, this is your opportunity to provide guidance to young gardeners. In-betweens, this is your opportunity for intensive exchange.

Here's a plan: 1) Read the feature articles in this magazine about Seattle and gardening in the Northwest. 2) Register for the Annual Meeting; a full program and registration form was in your March News Edition. 3) Arrange for travel and accommodations. 4) Show up in Seattle June 19. Together we will explore this paradise we call the earth.

Elvin McDonald AHS Board of Directors



Adventure and rugged beauty await those exploring the natural gardens of Alaska this June.

# AHS STUDY TOURS A wonderful way to go!

## April 21-May 6, 1990 Belgium and Holland

Begin in Brussels by visiting its botanical garden, arboretum, and the University Herb Garden. Other stops in Belgium include the Floralies of Ghent, a flower festival that occurs every five years, and the Royal Botanical Garden in Bruges. In Holland, spend seven days cruising its canals with stops at Boskoop, the largest nursery in the Netherlands; the world's largest flower auction at Aalsmeer; and the magnificent Keukenhof Gardens. The tour will be led by Richard Hutton of Conard-Pyle/Star Roses.

## June 23-July 3, 1990 Wilderness Gardens of Alaska

Join the adventure aboard the 138-passenger Yorktown Clipper as she sails between Juneau and Ketchikan in search of natural wonders including wildlife as well as spruce forests, fields of lupines, and giant ferns. See, up close, Tracy Arm, Glacier Bay, and Le Conte Bay as you cruise along the sheltered inside passage of Alaska. Visit quaint and historic Alaska towns such as Skagway, known as the "Garden City of Alaska." Then enjoy an optional post-cruise stay in Vancouver to enjoy Nitobe Japanese Gardens and VanDusen Botanical Gardens as well as the famed Butchart Gardens on Vancouver Island. Join AHS President Carolyn Lindsay and Bob Lindsay on board this Alaskan adventure scheduled just after the Annual Meeting in Seattle.

# September 20-October 3, 1990 Castles and Gardens of Scotland

In the Western Highlands of Argyll, see Culzen Park Castle and Crarae Woodland Gardens. Spend two days at the Isle of Skye's Clan Donald Center, forty acres of woodland gardens and nature trails on the grounds of Armadale Castle. Visit the highland gardens at Inverewe before traveling on to Inverness and Edinburgh. You'll be welcomed by the castles' owners and guided by Everitt Miller, former director of Longwood Gardens and past AHS president.
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#### November 10-17, 1990 Gardens of the Colonial South

Board the Nantucket Clipper in Florida and travel north to old Southern gardens on Sea Island, private gardens in Savannah and Hilton Head, and the significant and historic gardens of Charleston. While cruising the Intracoastal Waterway you'll have opportunities to view splendid marshlands teeming with birds and wildlife. Join Carolyn and Bob Lindsay on board this yacht cruise exploring the Colonial South. Mrs. Lindsay is the current AHS president. Leonard Haertter Travel Company, 7922 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105 (800) 942-6666 (in Missouri, 314-721-6200).

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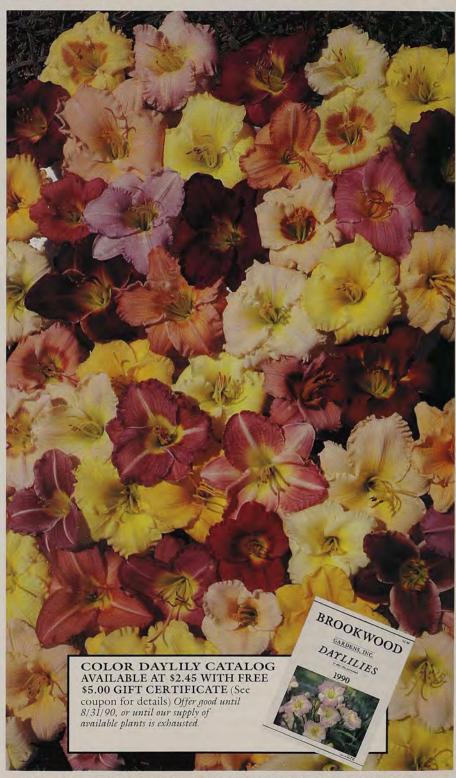
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# **Book Reviews**

## The Besler Florilegium

Basilius Besler. Harry N. Abrams, New York. Republished 1989. 542 pages. Color illustrations. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$150. AHS member price: \$129.95.



Majestic and fit for a queen are apt adjectives for this wonderful volume of historic prints. Originally published in 1613, Besler's Florilegium was given as a gift to Empress Josephine in 1806, when it was a mere 200 years old. The empress was not disappointed.

Abrams is to be commended for republishing this fantastic volume of prints, which documents the entire botanical collection, in order of bloom, of the garden of the Bishop of Eichstätt. The garden was created and cared for by Besler, a botanist and apothecary. The book contains more than 1,000 drawings representing species from both the New and Old Worlds-an enchanting array of plants that will not only delight you visually but also amaze you with their familiarity almost 400 years

Besler's drawings were converted to copper engravings, and this publication is based on hand-colored copies of the original works. They are beautiful and intriguing, both for their precision and for the creative and interpretive ways they are displayed on the page.

It is difficult to conceive that these prints originated in the seventeenth century when one notes how many of the flowers that Besler has so beautifully crafted are common to our gardens today: dwarf basil, double hollyhocks, parrot tulips, sunflowers, clematis, and Chinese lanterns. In many ways, gardening has not changed as much as we might think.

Adding to the informational value of the book is commentary on the species in each plate, incorporating Besler's own text as well as current nomenclature and information by the Musée National d' Histoire Naturelle in Paris. The book's reference value regarding these plants should not be minimized.

Folio-sized and weighing in at more than thirteen pounds, this volume is not one you will read casually on the train, but it is a visual joy. Should it not fit in your book collection or on your coffee table, buy a copy for your local library or botanical garden, where it can be kept in the open stacks for people to browse through and marvel at this great heritage of botanical

-Frank Robinson Frank Robinson is executive director of the American Horticultural Society.



## The Iris—The Rainbow Flower

Photographs by Josh Westrich. Text by Ben Hager. Thames and Hudson, New York, 1989. 143 pages with 146 illustrations, 73 in color, Publisher's price, bardcover: \$40.00. AHS member price:

The Iris-The Rainbow Flower is sure to become a most treasured possession of irisarians, flower-garden enthusiasts, photographers, and even collectors of "coffee table" books. This book has something for

# **GARDENING**

by Hazel Weihe

## **Drought Insurance**

Droughts...severe winds...not enough rainfall...what's a plant to do?

Our pets found spots in the shade during last summer's heat. Plants can't lie in the shade unless they're planted there and they can't go in for a cool shower unless you give it to them with a hose. But you can help them get through a long hot summer by using an anti-transpirant called Wilt-Pruf.

Think of the plant as inhaling and exhaling. When a plant inhales, it takes water in through its roots. When it exhales, it gives off moisture through its leaves. There are tiny pores in the leaves that give off this moisture. If the supply of water to the roots is too low, leaves become limp because they continue to emit moisture. In the process, leaves curl, become brown and desiccated. This is because they're giving off more moisture than the plant is absorbing.

What an anti-transpirant does is hold a balance between water taken in and moisture given off. Wilt-Pruf can sometimes make the difference between saving a growing tree or shrub and losing it.

An anti-transpirant is especially helpful when transplanting a small tree or shrub. No matter how careful a person is, the plant's root system is disturbed and some roots are lost. Wilt-Pruf has helped my transplants retain additional moisture after transplanting. Transplants need to be watered heavily to get them over the shock of having been dug. My plants have indicated by their behavior (they haven't died!) that Wilt-Pruf has been a definite help to them in surviving their trauma.

Wilt-Pruf is a clear organic liquid that in no way inhibits growth or harms a plant. Available at nurseries, garden centers and hardware stores.

Hazel Weihe of Somers, New York, is an award-winning writer whose garden column is syndicated by The North County News.



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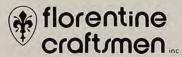
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(Bottom Left) Dolphin Fountain

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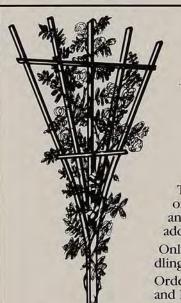
(Bottom Right) Mushroom Light

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each of them.

In all probability, the book was written with irisarians in mind, as the author begins with a brief history of the flower, the first record of which was made nearly 3,500 years ago as a hieroglyph carved in stone during the reign of Egyptian Thotmes III. This enjoyable book clearly explains the development processes of the diploid and tetraploid irises. It describes four centuries of breeding progress as well as the pioneer hybridizers who played such important roles in the development of today's modern tallbearded irises. In addition, Hager traces the tetraploid, pink, and bi-color revolu-

According to Hager, "No other flowering plant can present us with such magnificence of display as the iris yet exhibit such unqualified appeal in the individual flower. The architecture of the iris flower in all its forms is unique; every part is beautifully structured, but is there for a purpose." The parts are described in detail as to their functions. Though the book dwells on the bearded irises, brief descriptions are given of the beardless irises as well.

The outstanding feature of this book is found in the middle section: the seventythree spectacularly colored photographs of the single iris bloom, capturing every view possible. The lifelike works of art, most measuring nine and half inches by eleven and a half inches and printed on glossy stock, cover half of the pages in this book. Photographer Josh Westrich's work is breathtakingly beautiful and photographers will find many creative suggestions for flower photography; even the undersides are beautiful. "Sometimes it is rewarding to peek into places not intended for general viewing," says Hager. The series of stunning photographs begins with a bud of the iris flower ready to open, "a beautiful but provocative mystery." The last photograph of the series portrays this same bud having "flaunted its beauty for three days and disappeared." Everyone knows there is little, if any, beauty in a spent bloom, yet the viewer will find beauty even here.

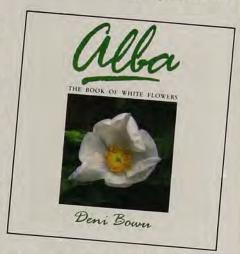
In the third section, "Notes on Iris," are the author's comments beneath black and white duplicates of each photograph. Included in the brief descriptions are bits of information for the flower gardener. For example, Hager suggests that darker-toned irises are valuable to the arrangement of any garden. He warns that the reddish maroon coloring will not blend well with pinks or blues. Dark violets are better with the latter group; dark browns give an extra

glow to pinks and yellows.

Many of the irises photographed were introduced in the 1970s, which makes them "old" by the standards of the modern irisarian. But after reading the captions that explain why each particular photograph was chosen and what the photographer was searching for, even this small fault can be overlooked. The expertise with which these two gentlemen handle their respective subjects is proven on the pages of this exceptional book.

Audrey Machulak

Audrey Machulak is a hybridizer of standard dwarf irises and twenty-two-year member of the American Iris Society who lives in Muskego, Wisconsin.



#### Alba: The Book of White **Flowers**

Deni Bown. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 1989. 160 pages. Color photographs. Publisher's price, \$32.95. AHS member price: \$28.00

Deni Bown, author of this white delight, is an Englishwoman unknown to most American readers, who should rectify their ignorance as soon as possible. In 1988, she produced two other books: Aroids: Plants of the Arum Family, already an important standard; and Fine Herbs, a plantsman's herbal. Besides finishing books at an astonishing rate, she is a gardener, botanist, and horticulturist, has grown orchids and herbs for nurseries, won prizes for her photographs, and bless us, she can write.

Throughout the first 100 pages in which she discusses "botanic," "historic," and "mystic" alba, Bown tells of artists from different countries and times who have used the universal love or terror of things white to symbolize their deepest feelings: Dante, Wordsworth, Ruskin, Melville; the white shark in "Jaws," the heron, the rat, the rose. White is psychologically more, not less, than a color, Bown says, and in most cultures has particular significance: in-



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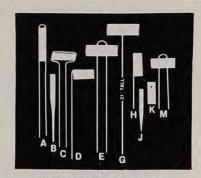
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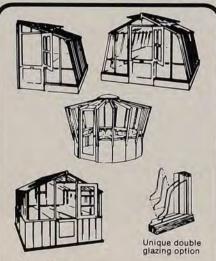
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nocence, chastity, purity, but also death and ghostly encounters. Many occasions commemorated with white flowers are among our most moving and emotional because of their relation to our higher values, or they are our most unpopular because they stir painful recollections.

This book was written for "those perceptive souls . . . who find [white flowers] irresistible," do not find them wanting or anemic, and who enjoy the shades and textures of flowers and foliage. I expect that all of the flowers you know and care to grow are to be had in white: bulbs, ground covers, vines, trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, and low borders. Check them out in Bown's fifty-page plant list. Do you know the white-flowered common sage? Hosta 'Royal Standard' and Bergenia 'Bressingham White'? Night-scented nicotiana, stock, sweet rocket, and Bown's favorite Easter lily, Lilium longiflorum? It is enough for me that I can have plump mounds of candytuft, that clematis with saucerlike blooms will climb my walls, that the annual white cosmos will dance through the summer on their slender stems, and that the pure white cleome is bound to forget it is an annual and reward us by returning for several seasons - if we don't care where! Roses, phlox, irises, impatiens, gardenias, zinnias, orchids, snake root-all names that send you to the seed catalogs and garden centers, your imagination ignited by a pure alba flame.

In chapters on white flowers in the garden and for the conservatory are helpful basics for choosing your garden framework, key plants that you can fill into your existing site over several seasons.

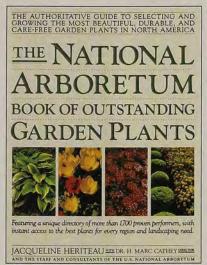
In the appendix you will find: twentynine words for "white" and "whitish"; twenty white gardens to visit in England and Wales; and more than 150 white flowers and their meaning in Victorian florigraphy, a secret language beloved of those sentimental folk, unbeatable for charm and comedic possibilities.

The photos and drawings are quite fine. Spare a moment for the graceful acknowledgment on page 160. "... the love of plants and gardening began in early childhood ... especially with my grandfather who showed me tigridias and zinnias, lilies and parrot tulips, and left me wide-eyed at their beauty." How fortunate we are for that warm and magical relationship that enriched Bown's future studies and the writings of her books.

-Faith Jackson

Faith Jackson, former book editor of the Miami Herald, is a Master Gardener who writes frequently about garden matters.

# Special Offer for Members



Through a special arrangement with the publisher, Simon and Schuster, AHS will be able to offer its members The National Arboretum Book of Outstanding Garden Plants at the special price of \$23.95, forty percent off the retail price.

The book, written by Jacqueline Heriteau with Dr. H. Marc Cathey, director of the arboretum, lists 1,700 garden plants - flowers, herbs, trees, shrubs, aquatics, ground covers, vines, and ornamental grasses - selected by the arboretum staff for their qualities as "proven performers." This means they were chosen with an eye not only to beauty, but also to their ability to flourish with a minimum of water and chemicals. The book is organized as

a "plant finder," enabling readers to find plants best suited to particular landscaping needs and conditions in their gardens.

The 320 pages contain 450 color photos. The end papers of the book show a color version of the new U.S. Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Map, the first revision of that map in more than twenty years. The book also launches a new Nursery Crops Coding System, developed by the American Association of Nurserymen. The code is a series of six to eight letters intended to assure consumers that the plants they buy are exactly what they are supposed to be.

Among those who have endorsed the book is Frank Robinson, executive director of the American Horticultural Society, who calls it "the best plant finder for North American gardens." Elvin McDonald, special projects director for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and an AHS board member, says: "More than any other single volume, this outstanding work will influence what we grow into the twentyfirst century. The state-of-the-art wisdom of top scientists, horticulturists, and passionate gardeners is organized and presented here so as to afford instant access to the informed guidance we all seek when making important plant choices for our gardens." To order, call (800) 777-7931 or use the coupon below.

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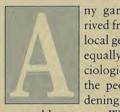
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# LANDSCAPES À LA MELTING POT

Seattle's immigrants, as much as its climate, have shaped its gardening vernacular.

by Jerry Sedenko



ny gardening style is derived from a synthesis of the local geology, climate, and, equally important, the sociological characteristics of the people doing the gardening. Although just 100

years old as a state, Washington is already developing a gardening style of its own.

What are some of the factors that give Seattle its "look"?

To many, it comes as a surprise to learn that the eastern half of the state is desert, with a climate much like Nevada. All the clichés about incessant rain pertain to western Washington, and even they are somewhat exaggerated. In truth, rainfall varies from 140 inches in the rain forests of the Olympic Peninsula to a mere seventeen inches in the northeastern sector of that same peninsula—only fifty miles apart as the crow flies. Western Washington is an area of pronounced microclimates, which, for the most part, are a result of the local geology.

Upheaval of the earth's crust, volcanic activity, and glaciation have produced the Puget Trough, in which Puget Sound is found. Moist Pacific air dumps rain and snow to the west, in the Olympic Mountains. Low elevations along the sound, between the Olympics and the Cascade Mountains to the east, receive thirty to forty inches of rain, nearly all of it occurring between October and April. Dry summers are the norm, and despite the surrounding water, humidity is comfortably low. This all combines to create a modified Mediterranean climate zone.

The deep waters of Puget Sound mitigate temperature extremes that might result from such a northerly latitude. Sound-front gardens in Washington are both cooler in summer and significantly warmer in winter than gardens nearer the mountains.

While constant rain may be a myth, it is not unusual to have cloud cover for a week or more at a time, at any season. But the winter blanket of clouds means that frost, while not rare, is by no means the norm. Usually, there is only one snowfall per year, serving mostly as an excuse to call a halt to the normal course of events and play in the snow. A deep, lasting freeze, say, into the teens, is a rarity.

With no tornadoes, hurricanes, hail, or thunderstorms, and with the typical pattern of gentle winter rain and mild sunny summers, it has been said that Seattle has no "weather," merely "climate." Comparisons have been made with England. In fact, just across the border in British Columbia, gardens have a decidedly English look. Since the climate is virtually identical, why the difference in gardening styles?

The reason is demographics. The state's first settlers were New Englanders who came in the mid-1800s to cut the tall firs for building San Francisco and other West Coast cities. Next came Scandinavians, to cut trees and also to fish. Some were direct from the Old Country, but many arrived via the forests of Minnesota. To this day, there remains an affinity between Seattle and Minneapolis.

The first Japanese arrived in the late 1880s. Before long, they constituted a significant part of the work force; many be-



came gardeners and nursery owners.

The New Englanders, as well as the Scandinavians, were a very democratic lot, intent on demonstrating to the rest of the world that they had nothing to hide, but at the same time not wanting to get too familiar with anyone. Consequently, the Seattle norm is a detached house on a sixty-foot lot with a twenty-five-foot setback. From the house to the street stretches an expanse of lawn, exposed for all the world to see. No shrubs or fences significantly block the democracy of it all; to do so would elicit suspicion. In this case, it's not



good fences, but good lawns, that make good neighbors. True, there are bosky neighborhoods, and most suburbs have woodsy, larger lots. But in the older neighborhoods, back yards are small, front yards too exposed, and side yards negligible; precious little remains for a real garden.

The impact of the Japanese on the city's gardens has been felt since they began arriving 100 years ago, albeit not always in the most positive fashion. The Japanese tradition of controlling the growth of plants has unfortunately led to collections-one could hardly call them gardens-of unnaturally pruned and contorted plants without any cohesive design. There are whole neighborhoods where these knickknack-shelf gardens are the rule.

Recently, two years of drought led many people to rethink the appropriateness of the greensward. Little by little, less demanding ground covers and shrubs are replacing bluegrass and fescue. And here and there, a front yard is being reclaimed as garden space by the erection of a fence or the planting of a hedge, particularly if there is all-important southern exposure. At this latitude, every ray of sun is cherished.

Botanical artist Kevin Nicolay has lived in London and New York, and now takes advantage of the temperate Seattle climate to grow a vast collection of cultivars, some not grown anywhere else in the United States.

However, despite the fact that the local climate is so conducive to creative gardening with an incredible range of plants, until recently only the hardiest were grown. But then, what did New England lumberjacks know beyond lilacs and peonies? The incipient Scandinavians and Minnesotans



suffered from the same lack of a horticultural vocabulary. True, the Japanese instilled a fondness for conifers and flowering cherries, but their major contribution was the use of the genus *Rhododendron*, for which a mania exists today.

The trend seems to be for immigrant Midwesterners to go to excess with "rhodies" and azaleas. A broad-leaved evergreen that blooms so profusely and grows so willingly is irresistible. There are some wonderful plants, grown to perfection by extremely knowledgeable growers. But there are also far too many "rhododendron ghettos," with perhaps a flowering cherry or 'Thundercloud' plum thrown in, that offer a hodgepodge of color for six weeks in spring and little except coarse foliage for the balance of the year.

nother idiom compatible with rhodomania is that of "natural," native plantings. Often, sizeable second-growth conifers are left on a building site out of a genuine preservationist de-

sire. Then, after the bulldozers depart, the native vegetation regrows. Consisting largely of huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*), salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), and sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), this undergrowth is often left to its own devices. It is valuable in that it does grow in the dense, dry, year-round shade of conifers.

This was the scene until five or six years ago. Suddenly, everyone is mad for gar-

Above: These severely pruned "Japanesque" shrubs are an old tradition that is giving way to a more natural look. Right: Fences, seen as undemocratic by Washington State's early settlers, are an anomaly among Seattle landscapes. Opposite: The author's "border-pink" garden section on Bainbridge Island outside Seattle. dening. Formerly humdrum garden centers are expanding their offerings, spring and summer garden shows are major cultural events, and Seattle is finally fulfilling its potential as a hub for creative gardening.

How did this all come about? Largely through the current vogue for English gardening, but also as a result of recent immigration patterns. The new migrants are from California, and just as former settlers brought along plants familiar to them, so too have the Californians. They are taking advantage of the Mediterranean bent of the climate to try many plants from other summer-dry mild areas, such as South Africa, Chile, the Mediterranean proper, and the Antipodes, in some cases with great success. At last, the long overdue expansion of the area's horticultural vocabulary is occurring.

And lucky Seattle, with its "English" climate, can also take easy advantage of that country's rich garden heritage. All those books that have been inundating the booksellers not only deal with a virtually identical situation, but they're even conveniently in the same language!

There is, of course, a danger of too much aping or bastardization of any strong, newly fashionable style; witness the "Japanesque" trend. It is hoped that, with all this enthusiasm and the influence of two of the world's richest gardening traditions already in evidence, Seattle gardeners will fully define a unique local style by further incorporating elements of "native gardening." These things take time, of course, but there is far more awareness than ever before of what the potential is.

Already, some of the most capable gardeners in North America live in the area, and many more are finding their way here to take advantage of the possibilities afforded by the climate and to be around other keen gardeners. Remarkable specialty nurseries are springing up to satisfy the demand for new and different plants. Special-interest plant societies abound, and there is phenomenal loyalty to such beautiful public gardens as Washington Park Arboretum and Lake Washington Boulevard, laid out in 1903 by the famed Olmsted brothers.

Northwesterners have long had an inferiority complex, about the rain, about being from the "other" Washington. But no more. Recently, "recognized garden authorities" from the East Coast and abroad have visited the area and been highly impressed by what they saw. The rest of the world seems to be casting the Pacific Northwest in the role of a Cinderella gardening spot. With all the recent developments, it seems justified.

Jerry Sedenko is a garden designer and free-lance writer.





# Story by Ann Nugent • Photos by Timothy Harris • CAPE TO WHIDBEY ISLAND

Many of us with nine-to-five jobs have daydreamed about chucking it all and getting paid to garden full-time. Bill and Mary Stipe did it.





Above: The tiny leaves of Rhododendron impeditum contrast sharply with those of R. campanulatum. Opposite: Bill and Mary Stipe and Bear.

t's mid-January, and a little snow covers the trail along which Bill and Mary Stipe, resident managers of the Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens, have brought their visitor. They pause to direct attention to a tree-sized rhododendron with large, dark pink flowers. Not only is it breaking all the rules by blooming at this time of year, but it blooms all winter long. They call it 'Starfish'. But don't look for it in any catalog. "It's never officially been named," Bill says, "never been registered."

The Stipes began their new job just two years ago, and the unusual plants continue to delight them, as does the setting. The gardens are on Whidbey Island, about an hour and a half, counting the ferry ride, north of Seattle. The grounds face Puget Sound, Camano Island, and the Cascades. From the house as you look north, you can see Mt. Baker.

Meerkerk's life as a public garden and the Stipes' new life as its caretakers began simultaneously.

Both Bill and Mary had worked at Boeing Aircraft Company for about thirty years. As manager of the procurement division, Bill was in charge of obtaining electronic equipment for Boeing's commercial airlines. "The pressure was tremendous," he says. "If our suppliers were behind schedule, I'd often have to find out why and go to wherever the plant was—Japan, Germany, Italy, Puerto Rico."

Mary was a manager in Boeing's computer services department, often working the evening shifts so she could be home during the day with their four children. "I had on-line computers in all the plants—Bellevue, Kent, Everett, Renton, Seattle, Auburn," she says, "so I often had to visit two plants a night to take care of operating problems. And commuting often took two hours a day. You get very tense in traffic like that." The couple saw little of each other; their office locations, shifts, and vacations were rarely the same.

Bill grew up on a farm in eastern Washington, where he enjoyed growing flowers, planting trees, and experimenting with different varieties of wheat. But he was interested in electronics, too, so he came to Seattle in 1956 to work at Boeing. Seattle's rhododendrons, which don't grow in the arid eastern half of the state, immediately caught his fancy. "Every time we'd go somewhere, we'd buy a new one." Then he began hybridizing and propagating his own. Eventually, he had more than a thousand on their three-quarter-acre property in Burien. He was giving them away to friends. "We just had to find a bigger place to put all of our rhododendrons.'

The original owners of these gardens, Max and Ann Meerkerk, were also transplants to Seattle who discovered rhododendrons late in life. They began developing the garden in 1963. Max died in 1969, but Ann continued gardening until she learned that she had terminal cancer. She arranged for board members of the Seattle Rhododendron Society to take charge of the estate after her death on the condition that they agreed to open it to the public. Because she would provide funds



to cover maintenance, the society accepted her offer. Now they needed someone to look after the garden.

"We always thought we would retire early," Bill says. They considered owning a Christmas tree farm or a commercial nursery. But when the Meerkerk opportunity came up, they decided it would be just as good as owning their own garden. Since Meerkerk is nonprofit, it didn't have a lot of money for salaries, but both Stipes had just turned 55 and were therefore eligible for early retirement. Otherwise, Bill observes, "we couldn't live on what they can afford to pay us to work here."

So they traded their office attire for blue jeans and their desks for this fifty-three acres. Most of it is forested with cedars, hemlocks, and Douglas firs, and carpeted with native ferns, wild huckleberry, and fallen logs covered with moss. An underground spring feeds two ponds. The land extends to a bluff, 150 feet high, that overlooks Puget Sound. The cultivated gardens cover about eleven acres.

Bill and Mary like being outdoors and physically active, inhaling the incense of the forest air. "We work twice as hard as we used to," says Bill, "but we enjoy it more. I've lost twenty pounds." He is lean and trim, and when he climbs a steep slope, only their German shepherd, Bear, can keep up with him. Adds Mary: "We're both healthier living out here. I've stopped having stress headaches."

They also like the fact that they can work together, although Mary is modest about her role as apprentice gardener, calling herself "just an extra set of hands." In spite of all the bad jokes about retirement leading to too much togetherness, Bill is sorry they didn't start working together sooner. "We have fewer problems than we did before," he says. Adds Mary: "Before, it was two careers going in two directions. Now we're both working toward the same goal and it's much easier. So the stresses are so much less."

When the Stipes took on the Meerkerk Gardens-more wilderness than gardens-the property had been tended only occasionally by volunteers for nearly a decade. One of the first things the new managers did was to clear out some overgrown laurels that the Meerkerks had planted years earlier. The plants had grown fifteen feet high and about as wide, and were crowding the native growth and throwing too much shade. Hidden among

them they found some long-forgotten trees: one, a grand fir, is a native; a banksia pine and a sequoia from the Sierras were planted by the Meerkerks.

"Ann Meerkerk didn't hesitate to buy plants from around the world," Bill says. He points to a large rhododendron growing in a clearing not far off the path. "That's called 'Loderi King George'. It came through the Panama Canal from England. She ordered large ones because rhododendrons often take twenty years to bloom and she

The unregistered 'Starfish' in bud.

didn't want to wait. Money wasn't a problem, so she could afford to do that." But Ann Meerkerk wasn't above hunting for bargains from local sources, Mary adds, noting that she bought many of her plants at the annual University of Washington Arboretum sales.

The Meerkerks moved to Seattle in the '60s, and it didn't take long before gardening was their chief passion. When they

joined the Seattle Rhododendron Society and got to know the local hybridizers, they became interested in cross-pollinization and started creating their own hybrids. "We have a large bed of their hybrids, which we call the Meerkerk collection," Bill says. "But they never got around to registering them, so they still don't have names." The varieties of rhododendrons seem endless: more than 1,800 different species and hybrids. Some are arranged neatly in beds, while others are scattered through the forest. They range from ground covers and small shrubs with leaves and flowers as tiny as peas (Rhododendron impeditum, R. intricatum, R. glomerulatum) to treesized giants with paddle-sized leaves and flowers as regal as king's crowns (R. falconeri, R. rex, R. basilicum).

The Meerkerk garden is now the region's chief hybrid test site. The test gardens lie in a series of large beds near the entrance. Experimenters, including wellknown local hybridizers Dr. Ned Brockenbrough, Lloyd and Edna Newcomb, and Elsie Watson, bring their yearling hybrid rhododendrons here to see how they will survive under various conditions. They submit three of the same kind, and if the hybrid is still thriving after five years, it gets named and registered. The Stipes then sell two to foundation members and keep one for the gardens.

Bill Stipe brought many of his own hybrids-which like 'Starfish' and others of the Meerkerks have not yet been registered-with him when he moved, and he enjoys continuing to experiment. "Just this morning I was cross-pollinizing the 'Loderi King George' with the R. yakushimanum, hoping to develop a hybrid that has the King's fragrant blooms but is less leggy and more compact." Together, the Stipe and Meerkerk collections probably number about 500 hybrids, but the evaluation process takes time, Bill explains, and he

"The test gardens have a lot of interest for people," he continues, "particularly those in the area who are building new homes. They'd like to know what plants grow well here. We take them through the garden to show them. For instance, we tell them you'd better not get the type that froze here last year," (R. edgeworthii).

will be very particular about what he

Although the Meerkerk Gardens are best known so far among rhododendron specialists, the test sites and display beds are

# The Rhododendron Species Foundation



R. atlanticum is one of more than 500 species to be seen at the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

The Meerkerk Gardens are not included in tours scheduled for the American Horticultural Society meeting in June, but the group will be going to another major public garden specializing in Washington's state flower: the twenty-four-acre Rhododendron Species Foundation grounds at Federal Way.

While Meerkerk is the Northwest's test site for new hybrid rhododendrons, the foundation is the only known botanical garden devoted to rhododendron species. It grows 503 of the 850 known species and 2,200 of their different forms. "Our purpose," says species foundation director Richard Piacentini, "is to collect and preserve the rhododendron species at an off-site location, because many of them in certain areas of the world are endangered."

One of the foundation's primary activities is propagating the various species in its collection in order to grow back-up plants at various stages of maturity. It also sells propagations as part of its aim of preservation

through dissemination and as a way to raise money to support its operations. Its catalog, available to members, is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

The directors of both gardens believe it's important to keep in contact with each other. "We attend each other's meetings to trade information," says Meerkerk resident manager Bill Stipe. "We hope to help each other in other ways, too: trading plants, for instance. The climate here on Whidbey Island is a bit milder. A few of the more tender rhododendron species might grow better here than at Federal Way."

Both directors value networking with like-minded botanical organizations elsewhere. Piacentini, for instance, maintains close ties with the Center for Plant Conservation in Boston, a major supporter of off-site plant conservation. For more information on the Rhododendron Species Foundation, write P.O. Box 3798, Federal Way, Washington 98063-3771, or call (206) 661-9477. -A.N.

chooses to register.

only a small part of the extensive grounds. The Stipes want to reach a wider public: gardeners of all kinds, flower lovers, hikers, nature buffs. Five miles of trails wind through the property; among the frequent visitors are bird-watchers and mushroomgatherers.

There are other types of plants worth seeing, and the Stipes enjoy showing them off when they lead tours: an aromatic "cedar" from Tennessee that's actually a *Juniperus virginiana*; ginkgos, with their unvarying fan-shaped leaves; the Asian maples, *Acer davidii*, whose leaves are round as an elm's. But see the winged seeds? That's how you can tell it's a maple, Bill explains. Among the salal and wild huckleberry,



Above: R. macronulatum. Right: 'Starfish' in bloom.

between some Western red cedars and Douglas firs, he points to a Chinese dogwood (Cornus kousa var. chinensis). It spreads wide as a parasol, its pale green foliage sprinkled with translucent white blossoms that glow like stars from May through July. Although both the Meerkerks and the Stipes let the trees grow naturally, this one looks like it's been pruned by an oriental artist. Bill is pleased that this dogwood has adapted so well on the

#### Sources for Rhododendrons

Cummins Garden, 22 Robertsville Road, Marlboro, NJ 07746, catalog \$2.

Greer Gardens, 1280 Goodpasture Island Road, Eugene, OR 97401, catalog \$2.

Mellinger's Inc., 2310 W. South Range Road, North Lima, OH 44452, catalog free.

Roslyn Nursery, 211 Burrs Lane, Dix Hills, NY 11746, catalog \$2.



West Coast, since the native species has been succumbing to dogwood anthracnose here for five years.

Bill leads his tours with boyish enthusiasm, stopping at every turn in the trail to point out another exotic species, such as the *Cunninghamia lanceolata*. "Here's a Chinese fir or pine. It's neither a fir or a pine. It's got needles like long lances, but notice how they're softer and fleshier than pine needles." And then pointing to a large tree with red bark: "There's a dawn redwood called *Metasequoia*, but it's not a true sequoia. They thought it was extinct,

but about forty years ago, someone found a specimen growing in a monastery over in China." He takes you through a corridor of shoulder-high rhododendrons (*R. triflorum*) that look like azaleas, explaining that while they may look alike, azaleas can't be crossed with rhododendrons.

Near the pond, a visitor who says she's been on one of his tours introduces a companion visiting from France. Bill says he recently received thirty rhododendrons from French hybridizer Jean Lennon. "I haven't planted them out yet, but I'm going to make a special section called 'Rhodies from France'. Next time you come, maybe we'll have them blooming."

These aren't the only donated shrubs they need to plant this season. More rhododendrons grown by Port Ludlow, Washington, nurseryman Warren Berg from seed collected in China-R. bhutanense, R. kesangiae, R. flinckii - are on their way, and he and Mary must get a bed ready. But first they have to find a site. They examine the forested acres, gauging the sun's path throughout the seasons, and finally decide on a spot that skirts the east side of the ponds. It's forested now, and dense with undergrowth.

Rhododendrons need fifty percent light in the Puget Sound region, Bill notes. Because the area is second-growth forest the alders and maples can be cut, but he will remove them one at a time. "Loggers have offered to remove them for us free," he relates, "but we turned them down. We want to keep as much of the forest intact as possible.'

The Stipes are helped in their labors by members of local chapters of the Rhododendron Society-Seattle, Whidbey Island, and Komo Kulshan, whose members come from an area north from Everett to the Canadian border-but those living on the mainland can't always make it to the monthly work parties. One of the volunteers' favorite chores is rating the 600 plants in the hybrid test garden on their performance and appearance, Bill says, adding, "The more people we can get to rate the plants, the better.'

Funding is a bigger problem. When individuals make a substantial contribution, a bed is created in their name. When Harold and Rosalie Hall donated \$5,000, the Stipes used it to plant a bed of low-growing Himalayan rhododendrons found only on the higher slopes. The pattern of sturdy, tiny leafed shrubs - such as R. impeditum, R. fastigiatum, R. lapponicum-gives the effect of a multi-textured quilt. R. lepidostylum is covered with small yellow flowers; R. kiusianum has tendrils and spreads like a ground cover.

There is a drawback to this new life of theirs on Whidbey Island. They don't see old friends and family as often as they used to. But when their children, three of whom still live in the Seattle area, do come with their own offspring, or when the grandchildren come by themselves, they stay longer and enjoy themselves more than when the Stipes lived in the city. "They

can hike, go down to the water, walk through the woods, or just plain relax," observes Mary.

The Stipes not only got to leave behind the hectic city life and freeway commute, but they feel they're making a contribution to the future. "There aren't many spots like this left around," says Bill, "and it's nice that we're preserving it for future generations.'

Visitors frequently ask if the Stipes can sell plants, and Bill has some regrets that, with the exception of a few test hybrids sold to foundation members as a fundraising activity, they simply don't have enough staff to handle sales. He feels that there are too few nurseries with the type

of unusual, quality stock grown here or sound advice for customers. Such nurseries are usually small, he observes; they get run out of business by the lower prices of discount houses, which often sell plants that have been raised in a greenhouse, so that they die when planted outdoors.

"The best stock is field-grown stock, but it takes more effort to do it that way," he says. "I guess if we had more help, we could open a retail nursery. But I'm not sure I want to do that. It gets you back into the hassle of pressures, schedules, and budgets."

Ann Nugent is a free-lance writer who lives in Bellingham, Washington.



Bill Stipe admires the gigantic leaves of R. fictolacteum, which grows to forty-five feet.

# Getting to Meerkerk

The Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens are located on Whidbey Island about an hour and a half north of Seattle. Take I-5 north from Seattle to Mukilteo, where the ferry departs for Clinton at the south end of Whidbey Island. From Clinton take highway 525 north for about fifteen miles. Turn east at Resort Road, drive one-fourth mile, and turn left into the lane marked Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens.

The gardens are open spring and summer, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Admission is free. Group tours are welcome and can be arranged by contacting Meerkerk Rhododendron Gardens, P.O. Box 154, Greenbank, WA 98253, (206) 321-6682.

# Betty Miller's Soundside Medley

This four-acre garden up the hill from Puget Sound is so crammed with unusual plants that even the experts are hard-pressed to name them all.

By Richard A. Howard

Petty Miller's garden is a challenge. It was a challenge to its owner to grow so many woody ornamental plants on only four acres. It is a challenge to the visitor to find them all, and a challenge to horticulturists to identify the exotics she has assembled: several thousand taxa representing probably the most diverse collection in a private garden of comparable area.

As visitors approach the garden on a narrow thoroughfare, they are surrounded by the dominant vegetation of the Pacific Northwest. Tall stately redwoods, Douglas firs, broadleaf maples, western hemlocks, and cedars tower above the roadway. The colorful trunks of the madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) and the plumes of rock spirea (*Holodiscus discolor*) limit the view of Puget Sound to glimpses.

The property descends in stages over 200 feet, with the English country stone-and-cedar house on an upper level. The entrance drive descends to a small parking area defined with naturally aged granite rocks that have become covered with lichens and mosses. Here are evergreens of varying shapes and textures and a variety of maples that contrast in foliage and, in the fall, display brilliant color. Toward the house a narrow bed, the rockery, hints at the wealth of plant material throughout the property. The only manicured areas are a strict narrow strip of grass in front of foundation plantings on the east side of

the house and one slightly larger in a sweeping free form to its west. All rooms open to the western terraces that overlook this small lawn to Puget Sound, with its ever-changing traffic and the never-changing profile of the Olympic Mountains. At no time is one particularly aware of the house. It seems to be snuggled in among trees and shrubs.

Betty Miller and her late husband, Pendleton Miller, acquired the property in 1949. She was a sportsperson; a garden was something new. She filled expanses of prepared beds with white petunias, and after two seasons of picking rain-splashed spent flowers, abandoned the petunias forever. Two mature 'Gumpo' azaleas were proudly planted to flank the front door. In flower they stood out like a pair of squatting white ducks.

A German-educated landscape designer, John W. Fischer, had seen the horticultural potential of this property's mix of open space and woods, damp areas and dry. At this point, he advised that one's eye should pass pleasingly over a continuity of harmonious plantings. Suddenly, Miller could

Right: In the orchard area, the Japanese native shrub Disanthus cercidifolius is among plants providing brilliant fall color. Inset: Ken Gambrill, who will become curator of Betty Miller's garden; Steve Balint, who succeeded John Fischer as Miller's landscape designer; and Miller.





envision creating an overall sculpture with plants as the medium. She began seeking plants with interesting form, bark, foliage, different shades of green, and flowers. At first she obtained unusual plants from friends and local nurseries; then she began to search catalogs, and later, to help sponsor expeditions to obtain materials she liked. Eventually, Miller would help found the Rare Plant Group of the Garden Club of America, a small group of women dedicated to sharing the best of plant material.

These new plants usually lacked cultural instructions. It was a challenge to find the right place and conditions for them; each one was a learning experience. To better protect them, she decided to underplant in the wooded area and develop circuitous paths through it. Today, few plants in her garden are isolated enough to be photographed in outline. Certainly they do not grow that way in nature, and Miller concluded that plants want company, or perhaps competition, because the right associates obviously thrive and usually seem to do better when slightly stressed. She has found that she can intermingle plants, enjoy some surprises, and learn from her mistakes.

Thus, unusual combinations abound: a loquat (Eriobotrya japonica) near the base of a Chinese fir (Cunninghamia lanceolata) shows intriguing contrasts of leaf and branch; the young bronze foliage of a golden-rain tree (Koelreuteria paniculata) serves as a foil to a blue-flowered clematis (Clematis macropetala); in the fall, the brilliant gold of a bittersweet (Celastrus scandens) scrambles through the dark green of a Douglas fir.

A group must pass single file through most of Miller's garden. It is not the place for a crowd. Some of the paths are defined by discs of cedar wrapped with a treated fish net to improve traction. This requires the visitor to walk head down for safe footing and to avoid careless damage to plants, and—guess what?—the visitor sees more!

The wooded area is truly a layered garden. Native trees form the uppermost layers. Below are such ornamentals as Euptelea polyandra, Enkianthus chinensis, Symplocos coreana, Decaisnea fargesii, Tripetaleia paniculata, Rhododendron macabeanum, R. desquamatum 'Finch', and R. fictolacteum. Under this layer is a seasonal spring fantasy of intermingled species of Trillium, Roscoea, Arisaema, and





Gaultheria adenothrix berries and blooms. It is one of several representatives of the species planted on and around old fir logs in the wooded area.

Paeonia. Among the small shrubs, Tsusiophyllum tanakae, Rhododendron crinigerum, and R. amagianum are favorites.

Years ago, old growth logs of fir were scattered throughout this wooded area. On and around these natural "sculptures," one finds Vaccinium ovalifolium, species of Gaultheria and Cassiope, as well as five species of Shortia, which now encompasses the Schizocodon species from Asia. The latter are placed in filtered shade, for they won't tolerate the intensity of the noonday sun. The eastern bunchberry (Cornus canadensis) does well, but both

species of trailing arbutus (Epigaea repens and E. asiatica) are hidden under branches of evergreen shrubs such as the native salal (Gaultheria shallon). Sheets of twinflower (Linnaea borealis) highlight the forest floor. Also to be found here are the Asiatic goldthread (Coptis quinquefolia), a type of Jackin-the-pulpit (Arisaema nikoense), and meadow rue (Thalictrum kiusianum), near the American box huckleberry (Gaylussacia brachycera) and wild ginger (Asarum shuttleworthii). All remind the visitor of the similarity of plants of eastern Asia and eastern North America, often with twin species or genera debatably identical or taxonomically different.

As the wooded area opens to the west there is a collection of hemlock taxa intermingled with the wheel tree (*Trocho-*

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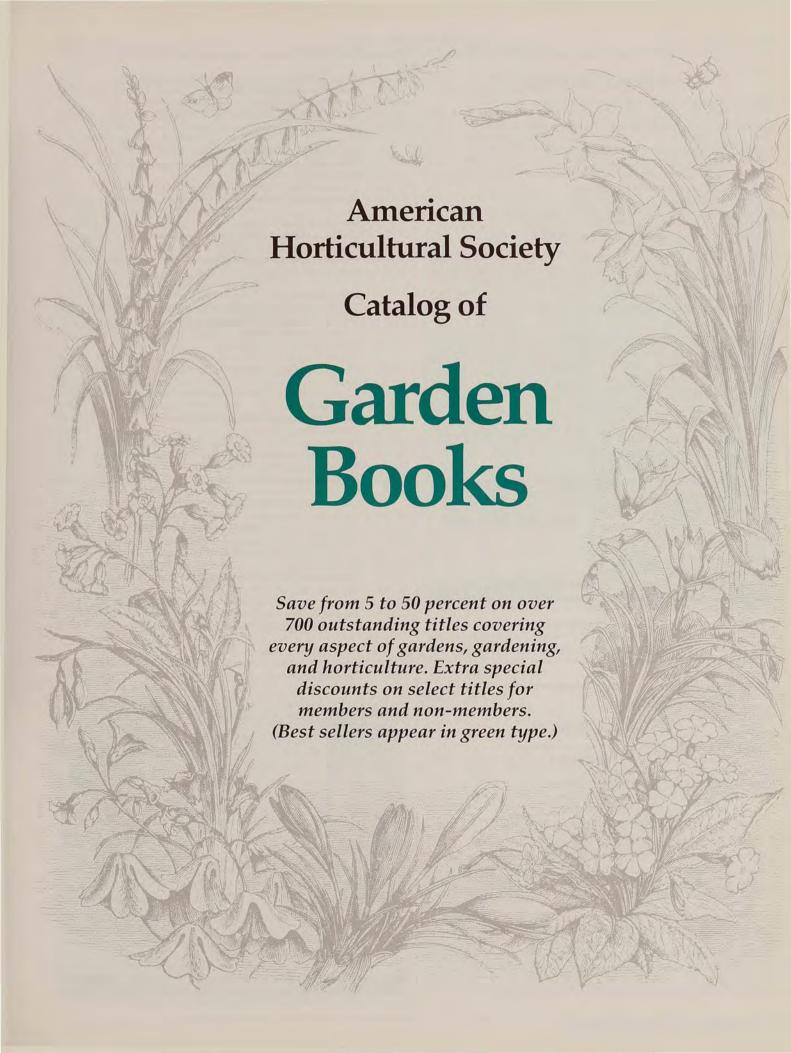
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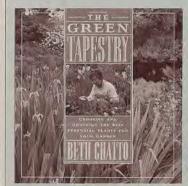
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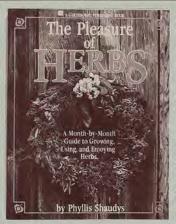
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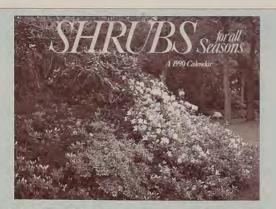
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dendron aralioides), dwarf evergreen oaks, small-leafed rhododendrons, and such dwarf conifers as the 'Fletcheri' Douglas fir and the 'Adpressa' redwood.

Behind the house is a steep bank that descends eventually to Puget Sound and an area of Northwestern natives. The bank has a brutal western exposure, with the summer sun directly overhead and searing reflections from the sound and the walls of the house. Shrubs cover this bank effectively. Different species of Podocarpus or dwarf forms of the evergreen Lithocarpus provide varying shades of green; color is found in the foliage of Rubus tricolor and the species and hybrids of the blue-flowered Ceanothus. The native salal also does well in the sun, producing white flowers, reddish leaves, and striking black fruit. Arctostaphylos uva-ursi 'Point Reyes' and Cotoneaster microphyllus 'Cochleatus' display small but brilliant red fruits. Xanthorhiza simplicissima has dissected foliage that is a brilliant yellow in the fall; Ceratostigma plumbaginoides brings accents of blue. Near the edge of the asphalt Miller has Rosa rubrifolia with its glaucous purplish foliage and bright red oval hips. Even a propensity for developing fuzzy vellow galls does not diminish the value of this shrub. Finally, Rubus calycinoides from Formosa serves as a tough ground cover that creeps out on the pavement.

The orchard area to the west of this bank is the most recent development. Here one finds outstanding examples of evergreen oaks, interesting willows, the spectacular bark of Acer ginnala, Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana, Syringa reflexa, and Parrotia persica. When in full fruit, Garrya elliptica catches the eye, as does an unusual Ginkgo biloba with elongated narrow leaves. An old Malus sargentii was an unexpected find and is perhaps the best plant of its kind in any American garden. It is always exciting to find a southern beech (Nothofagus), and here one can see N. antarctica, N. dombeyi, and N. procera from South America grown as specimen trees. Brilliant fall color will be found in Cladrastis sinensis, Rhus trichocarpa, Acer truncatum, A. japonicum 'Aconitifolium', Disanthus cercidifolius, Enkianthus campanulatus, and Fothergilla major.

Ground covers keep the orchard's soil cool by foliage transpiration. Waldsteinia ternata is one of Miller's favorites, for the plants are tough underfoot and their foliage does not detach but decomposes to

### How Has Her Garden Grown?

Betty Miller observes that it is difficult to teach others how planting is done. She maintains that it is basically a matter of common sense - not so much how, but what and where and when. An appreciation of art and a good sense of texture are important, for most plants can be admired in bloom for a relatively short period of time. Consider how they will look the rest of the year: the form and texture, the bark, the shade of green and its intensity, the stages of expansion and development. If your choice of plant or its location or care is not right, it soon becomes evident: the plant will tell you so. Then act promptly.

The Seattle area might seem to have an abundance of mist or rain or cloudy weather, but in Miller's garden, where good drainage has been developed, watering is a major concern. With such closely planted treasures, moving a length of hose is a careful operation. Sprinkler systems won't do, for the requirements of plants vary. Spring foliage under sprinklers often becomes soft and more succulent to insects. Miller uses soaker heads placed close to the ground. "Soak the area," is the instruction given, "don't just wet the ground."

Miller has found that it's important for air to move through the plantings, enough so that the branches themselves move. Stagnant air pockets slow the plant's growth and create a haven for fungi and insect masses. It is often necessary to remove branches or thin the higher vegetation to get healthy circulation. Spraying a fungicide or insecticide is an action of last resort. If this is not successful, the plant is

burned in order to prevent the spread of disease. This has happened only half a dozen times in nearly fifty years.

The garden abounds with wildlife, which some gardeners would consider pests. Rodents do pull out labels, yet they create drainage holes with their tunnels. Miller sometimes competes with the birds and rodents for mature fruits and seeds. "Plant enough for both of you," is her suggestion. Chipmunks and some birds plant many of the seeds they harvest, and certain seeds need to pass through a digestive system in order to germinate. Several of Miller's prize specimen plants are from these sources. The snakes and lizards are helpful; the raucous jays remove caterpillars, presumably to feed their young; lady bugs control aphids.

How does she keep track of all her plants? Initially a tan-colored metal label was hinged on a stout wire so it could be lifted or lowered to protect the writing on the underside. That label carried the names of as many as six plants in the immediate vicinity. At times only Miller knew which was which. Next she tried a plastic label pre-bent to forty-five degrees from the vertical, fluted for strength, and pointed near the base. These have survived for twenty years but are fading. Most recently Miller has acquired three-eighths-inch strips of rigid aluminum used in making storm window frames. These can be cut to the desired length and sharpened for insertion. Once inscribed, they are dipped in an exterior acrylic emulsion paint, Rhoplex AC.235. The label can be pushed almost to ground level beside the plant and remain inconspicuous.

form a mat that enriches the soil. Other ground covers produce a loose, friable soil that retains moisture and seems to aid air absorption. Outstanding in this regard are species of coral-bells (Heuchera). In large areas Vancouveria chrysantha and V. planipetala 'Prostrata', with its very small, shiny foliage, are used along with Epimedium perralderanum and Rubus tricolor.

Miller has recently started a small marsh

garden by lining a shallow excavation with plastic. A lazy-S walkway winds through small ornamental grasses, sedges, and lilies, including Imperata cylindrica var. rubra, Uncinia rubra, and Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'. The handsome Blechnum tabulare serves as background. A prostrate Gunnera hamiltonii, an endangered plant in its native New Zealand, is thriving. The Asian skunk cabbage (Lysichiton camtschatcense) with its opaque

white spathes, can be seen among plants of Ledum glandulosum, Kalmia micro-phylla, and Philesia magellanica.

Miller's garden has developed in phases. The heath family first intrigued her; then her interest turned to ferns, then to gymnosperms and ground covers. She has no favorites now, but enthusiastically points out one gem after another. She has a story for each. Korean fir (Abies koreana) with its perpendicular cones is as much admired as the smallest conifer, mountain rimu (Dacrydium laxifolium). A group of club moss species (Selaginella) next catches her eye. She defies you to find the minute cones on a Jack pine fifteen years old but only two and a half feet high. An ash (Sorbus poteriifolia) ten years old and a mere four inches high produces pink flowers and white fruits. A green mat of the tiniest white and purple-veined violets (Viola verecunda var. yakusimana) is everyone's spring favorite, yet no one to whom Miller has given plants can make them grow. Miller moves on to note the spectacular blue fruits of Billardiera longiflora, which derives its name from the long yellow petals. I suspect my favorite is either Gaultheria miqueliana with its white fruits or Gaultheria adenothrix with crimson fruits; or perhaps it is the Stauntonia hexaphylla covering the trellis on the patio, or maybe the Vitis vinifera 'Purpurea' transmitting such a lovely hue of sunlight! But every visitor to Miller's garden has his own.

All gardens have work areas and accessory buildings. Those in Miller's garden are inconspicuous. An area for plant propagation and the houses that serve as nurseries for young plants are hidden away in the plantings. Seeds are started in clay pots, which in turn are submerged to the lip in sand, soil, or mulches. During the summer, a slat house contains a collection of vireya rhododendrons. These, too, are in clay pots mulched deep in redwood bark but with the threat of a freeze, moved to closed houses where the temperature can be kept at 35° F by electric heaters while the air is circulated by small, low-speed fans.

The Seattle area suffered a disastrous freeze in the winter of 1988-89. There was great damage to plants in this neighborhood, even to the commonly planted cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). The temper-

Far right: Billardiera longiflora has spectacular blue fruit, but its name comes from its long yellow blooms (see page 46).

ature fell to 10° F with a snow cover, but the real damage was done in the following three weeks by a great fluctuation in the temperature and dehydrating winds. Miller characteristically has held off severe pruning to see how the plants respond. When asked what she lost, she replies that she hasn't given up on any plant yet. Some obviously will require heavy pruning or replacement, while others will not only survive but recover much of their form. Her patience is apparently being rewarded, for Miller observes that never has the Indian pipe (Monotropa uniflora) been so abundant.

Looking to the future, Miller wants her garden continued and has chosen land-scape architect and nurseryman Ken Gambrill as curator. The plant records of the garden, now on cards or in notebooks, are being placed in a database for easier accessibility. Recently the entire garden was surveyed, and Miller is mapping the lo-

cation of each plant in her collection, with the help of horticulturists Mareen Kruckeberg and Joseph Bishop. It is hoped that each one also will be documented by a herbarium specimen. The garden will be privately and perpetually endowed, maintained as it is at present, and open to visitors by advance appointment. A board of knowledgeable people has been selected to guide the future of this remarkable collection.

Down in one corner of the orchard is a very large stand of clovers in a predominantly four-leafed form. Most visitors take a leaf in the hope that it can bring them the same good fortune with their gardening as Miller has had with hers.

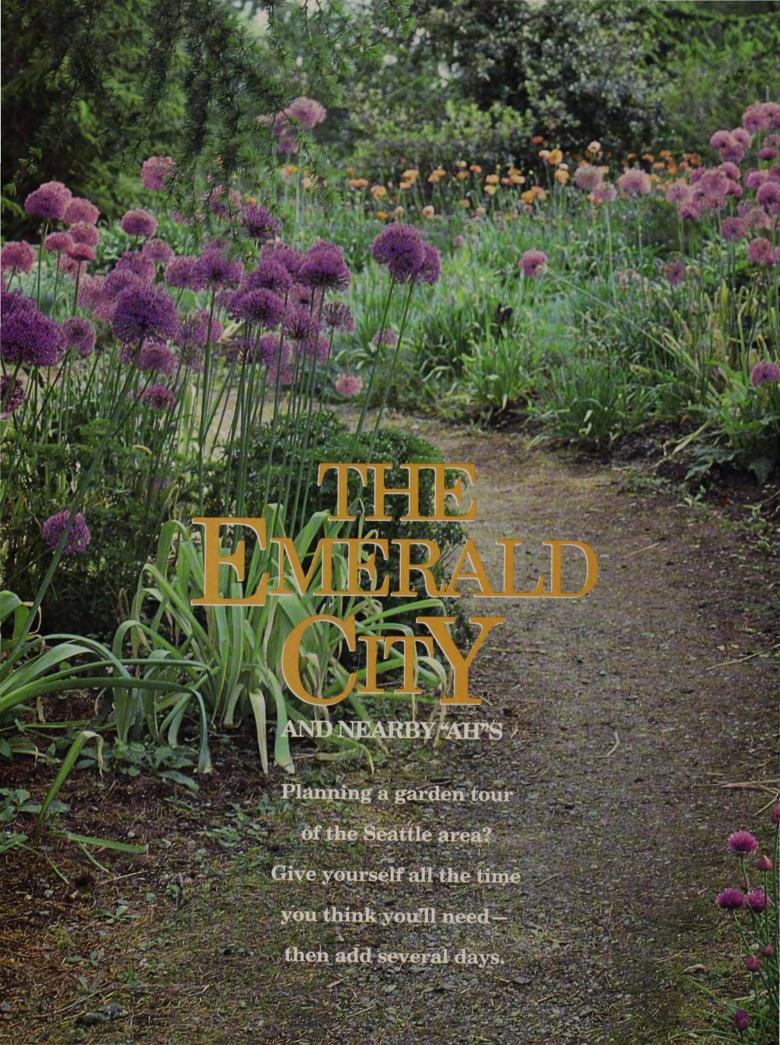
Richard Howard is vice president for Botanical Science at the New York Botanical Garden. A visit to Betty Miller's garden is among the activities scheduled for the 1990 American Horticultural Society Annual Meeting.

### A Lady of Myriad Achievements

A look at the horticultural accomplishments and environmental contributions of Elisabeth Carey Miller makes it difficult to believe she was ever a novice gardener who struggled with petunias and 'Gumpo' azaleas. She was a founder of the Washington State Roadside Council, where her service and influence on the horticulture of roadsides and parks is legendary. The Roadside Council and Miller are credited with shaping the model act that controls billboards. She was a horticultural consultant for Seattle's noted Operation Triangle, which mapped out plantings for traffic islands throughout the city. She served as horticulturist for Lawrence Halprin's landscaping of Seattle's Freeway Park, and has written and lectured on the need to know the pollution tolerances of plants chosen for urban, environmentally stressed locations. For many years Miller was a collaborator of the late Carl S. English Jr. in his landscaping of the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, and they shared plant introductions. She was instrumental in raising private funds contributed to the horticultural improvements along the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

Miller served as an adviser to the Arbor Fund, then responsible for administering the Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island as a resource for the University of Washington. It is now an independent foundation and open to the public. She helped with the difficult transition of the University of Washington's Arboretum to Washington Park and the Center for Urban Horticulture. She was among the founders of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society. She was awarded a gold medal from the International Botanical Congress for her role in their 1969 exhibit of Ericaceous plants. At the national level Miller has been active in the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, the American Horticultural Society, and the Garden Club of America. Her garden and civic contributions have earned her two gold medals from the Garden Club of America, including the Natalie Peters Webster Gold Medal; her awards from the American Horticultural Society include its highest, the prestigious Liberty Hyde Bailey Gold Medal Award, which she received in 1988.









#### BY TED MARSTON

choing the song from the Rogers and Hammerstein musical "Carousel," June in the Pacific Northwest is always "busting out all over" in garden color.

Rhododendrons and other broadleaf evergreens, pride of the area, are still in full regalia; perennials are coming on strong, and roses should be at their peak. Those who trek to the American Horticultural Society's Annual Meeting, June 19-22, will want to plan extra days either before or after to taste nearby garden delights not on the program.

Be assured that the much vaunted rainy weather comes mainly from October to March. (Although packing a raincoat will help insure sunny weather, natives will reassure you). Days here are the longest in the contiguous forty-eight states—the closest thing we have to the "White Nights" of midsummer Scandinavia. On the longest day, June 21, sunrise in Seattle is at 5:12 a.m., ideal for picture taking before an errant breeze stirs foliage and flower. Sunset at 9:10 p.m. allows a really full day of garden gazing with time left over for a leisurely dinner during the long twilight;

Previous page and top: VanDusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver offers vibrant hues and subtle shades. Right: The Quarry Garden at Queen Elizabeth Park, light will be visible on the western horizon behind the Olympic Mountains as late as 11 p.m.

The ferry system in Washington and British Columbia is the most extensive in North America, allowing visitors to leapfrog from sophisticated urban gardens to primeval forests with relative ease.

Some of the major horticultural landmarks will be part of the conference, but there are many others worth seeing.

#### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Vancouver, which is only 135 road miles north of Seattle by car and a mere thirty minutes by plane, is a lovely city in a spectacular setting. It has an incomparable horticultural heritage founded on British gardening and fostered by successive waves of settlers from Europe and the Orient, each of which has contributed to the mix.

The Botanical Garden of the University of British Columbia at the edge of Vancouver is a must. Its serene Japanese Nitobe Memorial Garden is two gardens in one: a tea garden of moss-covered rocks in an abstract pattern and a landscape garden built around a lake. A splendid rock garden sprawls for hundreds of yards along a hillside; demonstration gardens of herbs, fruit, and vines are well designed. The strong suit of the recently developed Asian garden is broadleaf evergreen shrubs. Many of them should be in bloom in June; the Hawaiian blue poppies (*Meconopsis*) should be at their best.

VanDusen Botanical Garden, nearer the center of the city, has numerous views in

which skyscrapers etch the horizon, but the real treats are at gardening level. A pond and water garden showcase plants that like wet feet. Hillsides are covered with unusual trees and shrubs, including camellias, rhododendrons, and more. The perennial garden will be showing one of its peak bloom periods in June.

Nearby Queen Elizabeth Park has Bloedel Conservatory with its hemisphere devoted to tropical plants. Paths meander through several levels of plantings, and the rampant bloom of bougainvillea, hibiscus, orchids, and other exotics are made even more romantic by the calls of tropical birds perched on tree branches throughout.

Only a few blocks from downtown Vancouver is Chinatown, home to the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden, the only Chinese garden in North America designed and built by a team from mainland China (although a Sichuan-style garden is to be constructed in Seattle beginning in 1991). Chinese garden tradition combines sky, mountains, earth, and water as well as plants. The large central courtyard of the garden features all of these, plus an intimate scholar's garden and many viewing points from which to admire these aspects of nature. The Chinese garden overlooks the larger Dr. Sun Yat Sen Park with its large lake and surrounding plantings.

A ferry trip that begins at Tsawassen, south of Vancouver, goes through the beautiful Canadian San Juans to Vancouver Island, home of Victoria, the provincial capital. The trip ends seventeen miles north of Victoria and relatively near Butchart





A pagoda at the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver.

Gardens, a stunning show garden. Much of Butchart is set in a large quarry whose edges have been softened with trees, flowers, and shrubs. Perennials—delphiniums in stately spires, oriental poppies of all colors, great spikes of many-colored lupines—are at their best here in the mild sea air. Roses, too, grow to near perfection, clambering over pergolas and marching through beds.

Victoria, often described as being like England before World War II, is especially noted for the more than 1,700 baskets of flowers that hang from its street lamps. Flowers abound, from dramatic formal bedding in front of the Provincial Parliament to the vistas of Beacon Hill Park, within walking distance of downtown.

#### WENATACHEE, WASHINGTON

East of the Cascade Mountains—the dividing line between the state's verdant half and its desertlike region—is Ohme Gardens, which was featured in the February 1989 American Horticulturist. It is perched on a rocky hillside above Wenatchee and the winding Columbia River below. That water is everything here is made evident by the sharp contrast between the gardens' acres of alpine plantings and the parched landscape below and all around it.

#### SEATTLE AND ENVIRONS

A favorite site for both visitors and locals is Seattle's Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, where ships and pleasure boats are lifted from Puget Sound in the Lake Washington Ship Canal. The fish ladder there is a good spot to watch salmon returning to spawn, and gardeners can enjoy the Carl S. English Jr. Botanical Garden, seven acres of shrubs and trees named for the garden's longtime superintendent, who gathered rare plants

from around the world. It's also the home of Washington's largest palm trees, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, which are fan palms native to central China.

One of the largest of its kind is the Drug Plant Garden associated with the College of Pharmacy at the University of Washington. More than 1,500 species are arranged in formal gardens on three acres.

The Volunteer Park Conservatory on Capitol Hill is a small Victorian jewel, saved from decay a few years back, and now slated for expansion.

Next to the Woodland Park Zoo is a large International Rose Test Garden with all the latest rose cultivars as well as a large selection of long-time favorites.

Tired of just gazing at all these incredible plants? Molbak's Greenhouse and Nursery, in suburban Woodinville, is a treasure trove of color for both looking and buying. It is especially noted for combining colorful annuals in containers. Wells-Medina Nursery in Bellevue, just east of Lake Washington, is the destination of choice for those seeking unusual trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials. Grand Ridge Nursery, Issaquah, has become recognized worldwide as one of the best places for alpine and rock garden plants.

#### PORTLAND AND ENVIRONS

The Hoyt Arboretum has one of the nation's largest collections of conifers, both species and cultivars. On a rugged hillside overlooking the city from the west, the 214 acres also contain many other collections,

Below: Cattails in a pond at the Botanical Garden of the University of British Columbia. Right: A lantern-sculpture in that botanical garden's Japanese Nitobe Memorial Garden.



including native shrubs, flowers, and ferns.

In Washington Park on Southwest Kensington Avenue is another International Rose Test Garden. This one contains more than 10,000 plants that should be at the peak of their first flush of bloom come June. The views of the city are dramatic.

The Japanese Garden just above the rose garden in Washington Park is unique and exquisite—arguably the finest in the United States. Its five and a half acres are divided into several gardens—The Stone and Sand Garden, the Flat Garden, the Moss Garden, the Tea Garden, and the Strolling Pond Garden—each with its own tranguil beauty.

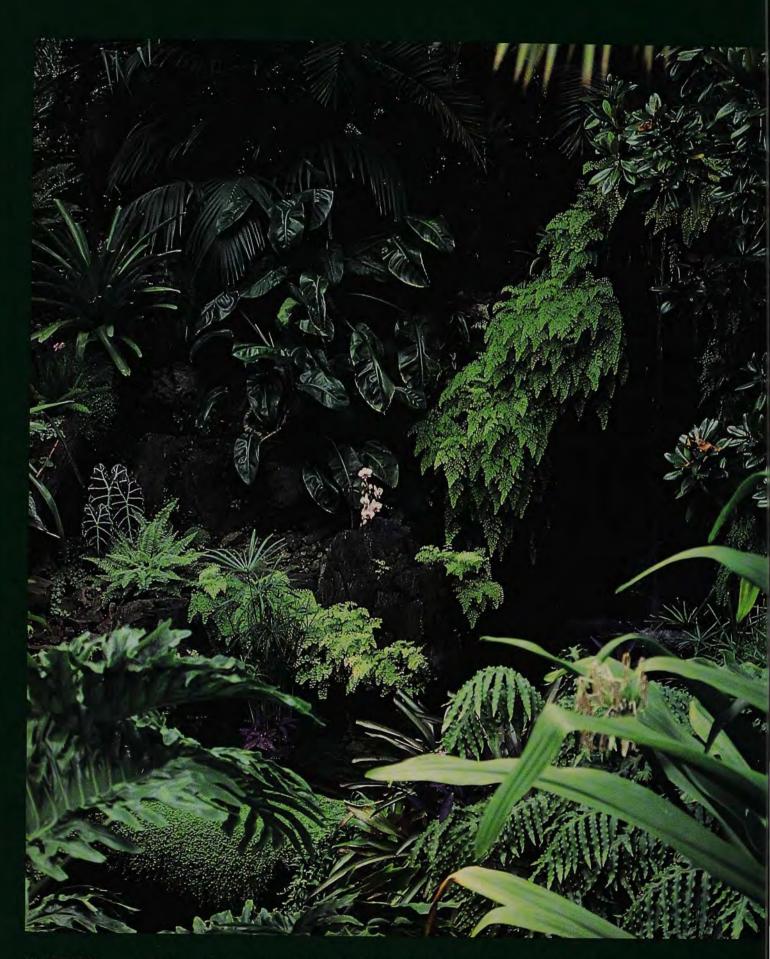


The Berry Botanic Garden, nearly seven acres of woodland plantings, has a notable rock garden. Its primulas, rhododendrons, lilies, and perennials will also be very photogenic then.

There are two outstanding rhododendron gardens in this area. Crystal Springs Garden has over 2,000 rhododendrons, many of which will still be blooming in June. The garden is nearly surrounded by lake and lagoon, and the springs have been turned into a water feature. The Cecil and Molly Smith Garden in suburban St. Paul, now owned by the Portland chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, is a collector and hybridizer's garden that has been featured in many national magazines. Clematis are among the choice plants here, where foliage colors and textures are combined with a flair for year-round appeal.

The Columbia River Gorge between Washington and Oregon is filled with special natives, and the slopes of Mt. Hood, east of Portland, are easily accessible for botanizing. A visitor's center just off Interstate 5 between Portland and Seattle gives a fascinating view of Mt. St. Helens and a good description of native flora, as well.

Ted Marston is a horticulturist and writer who lives in Kirkland, Washington.



## Visiting Details



Above: A hillside at the Ohme Gardens near Wenatchee, Washington, where alpines are grown in a semidesert environment. Left: The Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park features a hemisphere dedicated to tropical plants.

Many gardens that charge admission also have senior and youth rates. If no admission is listed, the garden is free. Open hours, which are seven days a week unless otherwise indicated, are for late spring and summer. Winter hours are usually shorter.

#### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

University of British Columbia Botanical Garden, 6804 S.W. Marine Drive, Vancouver. Open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission \$3. Nitobe Memorial Garden, \$1.50; both, \$4.

VanDusen Botanical Garden, 5251 Oak Street, Vancouver. Open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Admission \$4.

Bloedel Conservatory, Queen Elizabeth Park, 33rd and Cambie, Vancouver. Open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Admission \$2.40.

Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden, 578 Carrall, Vancouver. Open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission \$3.50.

Butchart Gardens, 800 Benvenuto Drive, Brentwood Bay. Open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Saturdays in July and August until 11 p.m.; includes fireworks displays). Admission \$9.50.

#### WASHINGTON

Ohme Gardens, 3317 Ohme Road, Wenatchee. Open 9 a.m. to dusk. Admission \$4.

Carl S. English Jr. Botanical Garden, 3015 N.W. 54th Street, Seattle. Open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Drug Plant Garden, University of Washington Campus, Seattle. Open during daylight hours.

International Rose Test Garden, next to Woodland Park Zoo at Fremont Avenue and N. 50th Street, Seattle. Open during daylight hours.

Volunteer Park Conservatory, 1400 E. Galer, Seattle. Open 10 a.m. to

Molbak's Nursery & Greenhouse, 13625 N.E. 175th Street, Woodinville. Open six days 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., until 8 p.m. Fridays.

Wells-Medina Nursery, 8300 N.E. 24th Street, Bellevue. Open six days 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Grand Ridge Nursery, 27801 S.E. High Point Way, Issaquah. Generally open weekends 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information, call (206) 392-1896.

#### OREGON

Japanese Garden Society of Oregon, 611 S.W. Kensington Avenue, Portland. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission \$3.

Hoyt Arboretum, 4000 S.W. Fairview Boulevard, Portland. Open daylight hours.

International Test Rose Garden (immediately below the Japanese Garden), Portland. Daylight hours.

Berry Botanic Garden, 11505 S.W. Summerville Avenue, Portland. Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission \$2. Call ahead for a tour appointment and directions, (503) 636-4112.

Cecil and Molly Smith Garden, 5065 Ray Bell Road, St. Paul. Open June 23, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Other times call (503) 246-3710 for appointment.

Crystal Springs Garden, 28th and S.E. Woodstock, Portland. Open 7 a.m. to dusk.

# LILACS

## The essence of yesterday, the promise of tomorrow

he scent of lilacs drifting on a spring breeze grabs hold of youthful memory like that of no other plant. For an adult, just catching a glimpse and a whiff of an overgrown lilac while driving past an abandoned homestead can conjure up a gentle past: high-button shoes, ice cream socials, lemonade on the front porch.

It seems that lilacs have remained the same over the years, but nothing could be further from the truth. Recent innovations in production have led to the creation of many new lilacs, among the long-favored French hybrids as well as the increasingly popular *Syringa* × *prestoniae* hybrids and the still little-known *Syringa* × *hyacinthiflora* hybrids. The possibility of having lilacs blooming for six weeks in spring instead of the fleeting two weeks to which most gardeners are accustomed is no longer a dream, but a reality.

Since 1941, seven distinct colors have been recognized: white, violet, bluish, lilac, pinkish, magenta, and purple. A cream has been attained, but breeders are still seeking a true yellow. They are developing shrubs resistant to heat as well as cold and disease. The gardener can choose among lilacs of varying habit and shape and size of flower and leaf. In 1960 there were only 600 registered hybrids; today, the number is approaching 2,000.

Until very recently, almost all of the production of French hybrids and  $S. \times hy$ -acinthiflora hybrids had been done by grafting the plants onto privet or green ash. Even as little as five years ago, rooting lilac softwoods of one variety in quantities of 25,000 or more was unheard of. But tim-

ing seems to be the most critical factor in taking softwood cuttings. Once this secret was unlocked, nurserymen begun to produce even difficult cultivars such as 'Katherine Havemeyer', 'Mrs. Ed Harding', and 'President Grevy' from softwood cuttings. 'Charles Joly', 'Excel', 'Monge', 'Primrose', and 'Sensation' are all produced with stands of eighty percent or better.

While tissue culture may be "high tech," cultures may take four to five months to get an unrooted microshoot, which must then be rooted, grown in a greenhouse for three months, and then in the field for two to three years. Nevertheless, tissue culture is paving the way for virus-resistant clones of cultivars essentially unobtainable a few years ago to become widely available at local nurseries.

What does this progress in propagation mean to the gardener? For one thing, a lilac on its own rootstock is a better-branched plant with a healthier, more vigorous root system. Most of the French hybrids sucker very little compared to privet or ash, so that even though they put down their own roots after a couple of seasons, they are easily overtaken by the more vigorous understock. When a lilac on its own roots sends up suckers or new shoots after dying back to the ground, they will always be from the lilac.

When it comes to selecting a favorite lilac, nurserymen have a distinct advantage over the home gardener. There is nothing like being inside a blooming block of lilacs to observe the differing qualities of cultivars firsthand. I can still remember the

Right: 'Edith Cavell'



dewy spring morning when I was walking through a scion block inspecting lilac blooms and discovered 'Katherine Havemeyer'. I would later find it described in books as mauve to pink, but that day, sparkling in the morning sun, it revealed colors not listed in any books. And the scent was incredible! A double-flowering cultivar, it has large blooms made up of many tightly packed, delicately shaped florets.

Even though there are many single-flowering cultivars that are heavier bloomers than some doubles, the twisting, turning florets of the double-flowering types are truly spectacular for those who enjoy looking closely at the flowers. As a nurseryman who has had the chance to develop a lifelong friendship with many lilacs, I count some of each type among my favorites.

#### FRENCH HYBRIDS

The commonly used name of "French hybrids" recognizes the contributions of the French father-and-son team of Victor Lemoine (1823-1911) and Emile Lemoine (1862-1943) who, over their lifetimes, bred more than 200 cultivars of *Syringa vulgaris*, seemingly of every shade imaginable. Today, many of them are being used to further advance hybridizing.

However, many of the so-called French hybrids have been developed far from the Lemoine home in Nancy, France. For example, 'President Lincoln', one of the finest blue lilacs available, as well as 'Adelaide Dunbar', a very good double purple, were developed by Paul Dunbar of Rochester, New York. 'Ludwig Spaeth', an excellent purple, originated at Spaeth Nurseries of Berlin, Germany. Such interesting cultivars as 'Charm' and 'Glory' were developed at Brookville, Long Island, by the great hybridizer, Theodore Havemeyer.

Just a few of my favorites that are widely available include:

- 'Charles Joly' (double, red). Dark red flowers stand well above the foliage of this medium-sized, very upright plant. The long, slender spikes and dazzling trademark color of 'Charles Joly' have kept it extremely popular over the years.
- 'Ludwig Spaeth' (single, purple). For someone seeking a dark purple lilac, this is one of the best choices. Its midseason blooms are held well above the leaves on tall, erect spikes. While it spreads somewhat, it is still more upright than many other cultivars. Because the flowers do not fade as quickly in the hot sun as those of



some others, it presents a more uniform color for a longer time.

- 'Monge' (single, purple). If you have room for only one lilac, this plant is an excellent choice. Its large flower spikes open slowly and their brilliant, rich purple holds up well to the sun. Dense and mound-shaped in habit, it requires little pruning to keep it in bounds, and the scent is far better than many cultivars.
- 'Macrostachya' (double, pink). One of the best pinks among the French hybrids. A very nice, full-growing plant that grows to a medium size. Its buds open to a beautiful clear pink and fade to almost white. The slender panicles are held upright, well away from the foliage. This is a fine ex-

'Minuet'

ample of a very old lilac (1874) that continues to impress lilac lovers today.

- 'Montaigne' (double, pink). A very vigorous plant that tends to open with age. Twisting, twirling, soft rose pink florets appear densely on spikes that range from four to seven inches long. They are very well scented, but not overpowering.
- 'President Grevy' (double, blue). Giant, billowy trusses of a clear delicate blue bloom in midseason. A very strong grower, this is a rather large, symmetrical shrub that makes a good background plant.
- 'President Lincoln' (single, blue). This is the truest blue of any lilac on the market

today. A very dependable bloomer, its flowers are borne on large double clusters. The panicles often reach eight inches in length. A large-grower, it can be easily kept in bounds by removing old wood.

- · 'Ellen Wilmott' (double, white). This large-growing plant comes equipped with stout canes adequate for holding up its immense, snow white flowers. It is one of the best whites available today, with the largest individual florets and light green leaves that are large, thick, and leathery.
- 'Edith Cavell' (double, white). A plant with large, interesting leaves and beautiful,

#### 'President Lincoln'



#### Sources for French Hybrids:

Bergeson Nursery, Fertile, MN 56540, free price list.

Carroll Gardens, 44 E. Main Street, Westminster, MD 21157, catalog free.

Heard Gardens, 5355 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, IA 50131, catalog \$2, refundable upon

Mellinger's Inc., 2310 W. South Range Road, North Lima, OH 44452, catalog free.

#### Sources for Preston and Hyacinth Hybrids:

Carroll Gardens, 444 E. Main Street, Westminster, MD 21157, catalog free.

Wedge Nursery, Rt. 2, Box 114, Albert Lea, MN 56007, price list free.

pale yellow buds that open to large creamto-milk-white flowers on heavy clusters. The flowers, which are very sweetly scented, are more lacelike than those of 'Ellen Wilmott' and appear later.

- · Madame Lemoine' (double, white). Long erect flowers appear profusely in a pure snowy white that contrasts nicely with its dark green foliage. It is the delicate lady of these three whites, smaller in stature with straight upright canes that arch out slightly.
- " 'Charm' (single, pink). A Havemeyer development of 1948, 'Charm' is an excellent, sweet-scented lilac of unique distinction. The individual florets are up to one and a half inches across and the panicles up to ten inches long and four inches in diameter at the base. It is somewhat open-growing with large leaves. Sparse foliage is fairly common with 'Charm', due in part to the heavy bloom that leaves less nourishment for leaf production.

#### PRESTON HYBRIDS

While extremely popular, French lilacs are far from the only type available to the home gardener. Many lilacs are not noticed in the landscape because they "don't look like a lilac." A good example is the Preston hybrids, which don't begin to bloom until a week or two after the French hybrids are finished. Here in Minnesota, this is generally about the end of May or the first week of June.

These spectacular plants are smaller statured, more upright and mound-shaped in habit than the French lilacs. The foliage is completely different, consisting of a long, narrow leaf that is somewhat puckered in texture. Preston hybrids are sometimes called nodding lilacs because of the flowerhead, which tends to droop over at maturity. Those who have never seen one in bloom are missing one of the treasures of the lilac realm. The effect is of a china doll too delicate to touch.

Unlike the French hybrids, they don't have to be placed far from the house; many can be used in foundation plantings with no fear that they will outgrow their welcome. The scent is heavenly, and the subtle colors will not clash with ornamentals of bolder hues. Low maintenance plantsremoval of the flower heads is optionalthey are as magnetic to butterflies as a Buddleia.

The Preston hybrids are named after Isabella Preston, a Canadian hybridizer who



'Miss Canada'

did most of her work at the Central Experimental Station in Ottawa during the 1920s. Some of the plants that carry the Preston name have been developed by other hybridizers; Syringa × prestoniae 'James MacFarlane', a very good pink that is hardy to Zone 2, was developed at the University of New Hampshire. Some of the finest that I have worked with over the years have come from Morden Station of Morden, Manitoba. All of those described come from there, and also are hardy to Zone 2.

- 'Miss Canada' (single, pink). One of the most beautiful pinks of any species of lilacs was developed by Dr. W. A. Cumming at Morden Station in 1967. A cross of S. × josiflexa 'Redwine' and S. × prestoniae 'Hiawatha', this is a real newcomer to the world of lilacs and has just really appeared on the market from the wholesale level in the last few years. A nonsuckering plant, it has somewhat larger foliage than other cultivars in this group. The flower buds are almost red in color, opening to a deep rich red pink in early summer. Butterflies, hummingbirds, and hummingbird moths seem to almost grow on it. Its intoxicating scent; clean, crisp outline; disease and mildew resistance; and extreme hardiness make this lilac a gardener's dream.
- 'Donald Wyman' (single, purple). Developed by F. L. Skinner of Dropmore, Manitoba, this lilac is certainly worthy of being called ornamental. Purple-to-lav-

ender flowers cover it in early summer and maintain their bright color throughout the heat of the day. Dark green foliage makes this a truly attractive plant to use as a backing for perennials or annuals. Reaching eight to ten feet in height at maturity, it is consistent in size with many of the Preston hybrids.

- " 'Minuet' (single, purple). For those of us who do not have a lot of room to spare in our landscapes, this is a plant that should not be overlooked. Developed in 1972 by Morden Station's Cumming, it grows ultimately to six to eight feet, somewhat larger than other Preston hybrids such as S. meyeri, S. patula 'Dwarf Korean', or S. patula 'Miss Kim'. But it is every bit as beautiful, and as sweet-scented a plant as any that have arrived on the retail market in recent years. The scent will often give it away before you see its prolific, stunning light purple blooms. They will last longer than those of many other Preston hybrids and appear later, peaking in mid-to-late June here in Minnesota.
- · Royalty' (single, purple). Beautiful royal purple flowers in mid-June add color to any landscape. 'Royalty' is a mid-sized plant that will eventually reach eight to ten feet, and like many Preston hybrids, can be resplendent as an informal hedge.

#### HYACINTHAFLORA HYBRIDS

Easily mistaken for S. vulgaris, the hyacinthaflora hybrids were a relatively unknown group until the last ten years. Neither home gardeners nor growers had discovered their attributes, and since there was little consumer demand, there was no reason to produce them in any quantity. This has definitely changed.

Their extreme hardiness-to minus 20° or even minus 40° F-makes them useful where French hybrids are hopeless. Very fragrant and prolific blooms, an attractive oval habit, and minimal suckering are just a few of the other features that are increasing these plants' popularity. The flowers, while single, are dense and stand well above the plant. The oblate, light green leaves give them a beautiful background.

Three of the best on the market today were all developed by F. L. Skinner, who was seeking plants that would remain relatively small in stature. Blooming about seven to ten days earlier here in the Midwest than S. vulgaris, they are proving themselves more than worthy as treasured landscape plants. (A drawback for Southern gardeners is their intolerance of heat; hot springtime temperatures tend to wash out their colors faster than they would those of S. vulgaris.)

- 'Assessippi' (single, lavendar). One of the earliest to bloom, it is a well-shaped plant that does not become leggy. Very fragrant, pale lavender flowers cover this shrub in early spring. First introduced in 1935, it is only now finding its place in the landscape.
- 'Pocahontas' (single, purple). Much deeper in color than 'Assessippi'-some have compared it to S. vulgaris 'Ludwig Spaeth'-this lilac is a knockout. Planting in open areas with good drainage will ensure fewer problems with powdery mildew; other than that, they are not fussy.
- " 'Mount Baker' (single, white). A snowdrift in spring is the best description of this single white-flowering lilac. Dense-growing, attaining ten feet in height, it will bloom from the ground up and look even more like summer snow if old growth is pruned

to keep the shrub only three to four feet tall. Removing old wood as the shrub grows will also help maintain a very dense appearance. The flower spikes are from four to ten inches long, backed by a soft green foliage.

No article can possibly cover the immense number of lilac cultivars on the market today. The improved techniques for propagating lilacs, coupled with their growing popularity, means that many of them can now be found in garden centers all summer long as container-grown plants with well-developed root systems. This means they can be planted not only in spring, but right up to the time frost is on the ground. Others not obtainable from local garden suppliers are readily available in mail-order catalogs. Whether the ones you choose are old or new, lilacs are what memories are made of!

Terry Schwartz has been on the staff of Bailey Nurseries in St. Paul. Minnesota, for sixteen years. Those seeking more information on lilacs may want to contact the International Lilac Society, P.O. Box 315, Rumford, ME 04276, (207) 562-7453

## Plant Thoughtfully, Prune Annually

When I give talks about lilacs at local garden clubs, I'm always surprised that many gardeners think lilacs are difficult to grow. Unlike many shrubs that bloom year after year, the lilac has only four basic requirements for good flower production as well as plant growth: good soil, adequate sunlight, drainage, and proper pruning.

Good soil, of course, is a requirement for good performance by any landscape plant. Any good garden soil that will produce keeper tomatoes will more than do for lilacs, but not just a shovelful in the planting holeenough to allow vigorous new root growth year after year.

Full sunlight helps lilacs develop food to produce strong stems that will set the next year's flower buds. A cold dormancy period is also needed for proper flowering, which means that some of our warmer states cannot successfully grow many of the lilacs.

Proper drainage, in the case of li-

lacs, means not having their roots standing in water that will stop air circulation through the soil. Any low areas that retain water will not make a good home for any of the lilac species. Having the soil on the dry side is preferable, especially for the French hybrids.

Pruning the French lilacs will create a much more dense and well-rounded plant than one left to grow on its own. Simply removing the older, larger canes after the spring blooming has stopped will insure having new young shoots develop by fall. Never prune lilacs in the late fall; the new flower buds are already formed and would be cut off by fall pruning. After flowering is over in spring, it is time to shape the plant and to remove any old flower heads that may hinder shoot development. Don't be alarmed to see only a few blooms in your plants' early years; it takes five to eight years for a lilac to reach full blooming potential. -T.S.

Right: 'Adelaide Dunbar'







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## Letters

#### Thanks for the Memories

What an unexpected pleasure to see the article in the December issue on "The Devoted Volunteers of Cranbrook House" by June L. Hicks.

For six years, from age 11 to 17, probably the most impressionable of my life, I was privileged to attend Kingswood School, directly across the lake from Cranbrook House. I was startled by the reminder of the old boat house, which I had not thought of for over fifty years. We were allowed to canoe on the lake, and that old building held a special fascination. Thanks for the article and lovely photos.

Donna Valley Russell Middletown, Maryland

#### More 'Remembering'

Your December article, "Remember Me in Flowers," was most interesting and intriguing. It personalized many plants I grow without pausing to consider their names. They are now my good friends.

I would like to add to your list one of my favorite house plants, the winter-blooming forest lily, *Veltheimia*, one of the few names whose origin I know. It was named for August Ferdinand Count Veltheim (1741-1801), a German supporter of botanical studies.

Adele Kleine Winnetka, Illinois In reference to "Remember Me in Flowers," Stephen Hales was a multifaceted scientist; he became the first person to measure blood pressure when he cannulated an artery in the neck of a horse.

As for the mountain silverbell, *Halesia carolina* var. *monticola*, being a small tree . . . it becomes 100 feet tall in the southern Appalachians and I have a 50-foot youngster in my garden . . . hardly a small tree.

Nickolas Nickou Branford, Connecticut

Hortus III, on which American Horticulturist bases its horticultural nomenclature, lists H. carolina and H. monticola as separate species. It indicates that H. monticola grows to 100 feet, but that H. carolina only gets about 40 feet tall. Michael Dirr, in his Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, says that H. carolina grows to 80 feet.

#### **Tending the Earth**

I very much appreciated Carolyn Marsh Lindsay's "Commentary" in the December issue. Gardeners face tremendous life-ordeath choices involving the designed landscape. It is great to see it expressed and linked to the greater ecology of Mother Earth. Gardeners, as some of her tenders, do set an example.

Steven Lawn San Francisco, California

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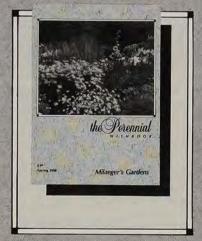
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## **Pronunciations**



These elongated yellow flowers give Billarderia longiflora its name. It is among the many unusual plants to be found in Betty Miller's garden near Puget Sound. (See article, page 22.)

Abies koreana AY-beez kore-ee-AIN-ah Acer davidii AY-ser day-VID-ee-eye A. ginnala A. gin-NAL-lah A. japonicum A. jah-PON-ih-kum A. truncatum A. trun-KATE-um Arbutus menziesii are-BUTE-us men-ZEES-ee-eye Arctostaphylos uva-ursi ark-toe-STAFF-il-ose oo-vah-UR-sigh Arisaema nikoense air-iss-SEEM-ah ne-koe-ENS-ee Asarum shuttleworthii ass-AIR-um shut-el-WORTH-ee-eye Billardiera longiflora bi-lar-dee-EAR-a long-i-FLOR-ah Blechnum tabulare BLEK-num tab-yew-LAIR Buddleia BOOD-lee-uh Carpinus betulus car-PINE-us BET-yew-lus Cassiope cass-EYE-o-pee Ceanothus kee-ah-NO-thus Celastrus scandens sea-LAS-trus SKAN-denz Ceratostigma plumbaginoides cer-at-oh-STIG-mah plum-bag-in-oh-IDE-ezs Cladrastis sinensis klah-DRASS-tis sin-EN-sis Clematis macropetala

klem-ATE-us mack-ro-PET-ah-la

Cornus canadensis KOR-nus can-ah-DEN-sis C. kousa var. chinensis C. KOO-sah var. chin-EN-sis Cotoneaster microphyllus koe-tone-ee-AST-er my-crow-FIL-us Cunninghamia lanceolata cun-ning-HAM-ee-uh lance-ee-o-LATE-ah Dacrydium laxifolium dah-KRID-ee-um lacks-ee-FOLE-ee-um Decaisnea fargesii de-KAISZ-nee-ah far-GEEZ-ee-eye Disanthus cercidifolius dis-AN-thus ser-si-di-FOLE-ee-us Enkianthus chinensis enk-ih-AN-thus chin-EN-sis E. campanulatus E. cam-pan-yew-LATE-us Epigaea asiatica ep-ih-JEEH-ah ay-zee-AT-i-kah E. repens E. REP-enz Epimedium perralderanum eh-pih-MEAD-ee-um pe-ral-de-RAIN-um Eriobotrya japonica eh-ree-o-BOT-ree-a jah-PON-ih-kah Euptelea polyandra yew-TEAL-ee-ah pol-ee-AIN-dra Fothergilla major foe-tha-GILL-a MAJ-or Garrya elliptica GAH-ree-ah e-LIPT-i-ka Gaultheria adenothrix

KOPT-is kwin-kwe-FOLE-ee-uh

gaul-THEER-ee-uh ah-DEEN-o-thricks G. miqueliana G. mi-guel-ee-AIN-a G. shallon G. SHAH-lon Gaylussacia brachycera gay-lew-SACK-ee-uh brack-ih-SER-ah Ginkgo biloba GINK-oh by-LOW-bah Gunnera hamiltonii GUN-er-ah ham-il-TONE-ee-eve Heuchera HEW-ker-a Holodiscus discolor hole-oh-DISC-us DIS-kol-er Imperata cylindrica var. rubra em-pur-ATE-ah si-LIN-dri-ka var. ROO-bra Juniperus virginiana joo-NIP-er-us vir-gin-ee-AIN-a Kalmia microphylla KALM-ee-uh my-crow-FIL-ah Koelreuteria paniculata kol-rew-TEAR-ee-uh pan-ick-yew-LATE-ah Ledum glandulosum LEE-dum glan-dew-LOSE-um Linnaea borealis LIN-ee-ah bore-ee-AL-is Lithocarpus lith-o-CARP-us Lysichiton camtschatcense ly-sih-KYTE-on kamt-shot-KEN-see Malus sargentii MAL-us sar-GENT-ee-eye Meconopsis meck-on-OP-sis Metasequoia meh-tah-see-QUOY-ah Monotropa uniflora moe-NOT-rope-ah yew-ni-FLOR-a Nothofagus antarctica no-tho-FAG-us an-ARK-tih-ka N. dombeyi N. DOM-bee-yah N. procera N. pro-SER-a Ophiopogon planiscapus oh-fee-oh-POGE-un pla-nis-KAPE-us Paeonia pee-OWN-ee-uh Parrotia persica pah-ROT-ee-uh PER-sih-kah Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana pah-ROT-ee-op-sis zhahk-a-mont-ee-AIN-ah Philesia magellanica fi-LEEZ-ee-uh madge-el-LAN-i-ka Podocarpus poe-doe-KARP-us Polystichum munitum po-LIST-ee-kum mew-NEET-um Prunus laurocerasus PRUNE-us law-ro-SER-ah-sus Quercus Chrysolepis QUER-kus kry-so-LEP-is Q. reticulata Q. reh-tick-yew-LATE-ah Q. suber Q. SOO-ber Q. turbinella Q. tur-bin-ELL-ah Rhododendron amagianum ro-do-DEN-dron ah-mag-ee-AIN-um R. basilicum R. bass-SIL-ee-kum R. bhutanense R. boo-tan-ENS-sis R. crinigerum R. kri-ni-JER-um R. desquamatum R. des-quah-MATE-um

Coptis quinquefolia

R. edgeworthii R. ej-WERTH-ee-eye

R. falconeri R. fawl-KON-a-ree

R. fictolacteum R. fik-TOLE-ak-tee-um

R. flinchii R. FLINCH-ee-eye

R. glomerulatum

R. glow-mer-yew-LATE-um

R. impeditum R. im-pe-DEET-um

R. intricatum R. in-tri-KATE-um

R. kesangiae R. keh-SANG-ee-ee

R. × loderi R. × LODE-er-eye

R. macabeanum R. may-kay-bee-AIN-um

R. rex R. REKS

R. triflorum R. try-FLOR-um

R. yakusimanum R. ya-koo-see-MAN-um

Rhus trichocarpa ROOS try-koe-KARP-ah

Rosa rubrifolia

ROHZ-uh rew-brih-FOLE-ee-uh

Roscoea ROSS-co-ee-ah

Rubus calycinoides

REW-bus kal-lih-kin-oh-IDE-ezs

R. tricolor R. TRY-kul-er

Salix magnifica SAY-licks mag-NIFF-i-ka

S. rosmarinifolia

S. rohz-mah-rin-ih-FOLE-ee-uh

Schizocodon sheez-o-CODE-on

Selaginella sell-adge-i-NELL-ah

Shortia SHORT-ee-uh

Sorbus poteriifolia

SOR-bus poe-teh-ree-ee-FOL-ee-uh

Stauntonia hexaphylla

stan-TONE-ee-uh hex-a-FIL-ah

Symplocos coreana

sim-PLO-coss kore-ee-AIN-a

Syringa × hyacinthiflora

sah-RING-gah × hy-ah-sin-thi-FLOR-ah

S. × josiflexa S. × jo-si-FLEX-ah

S. meyeri S. MY-er-eye

S. oblata var. dilatata

S. ob-LATE-ah var. dil-a-TATE-ah

S. patula S. PAT-yew-lah

S. × prestoniae S. × pres-TONE-ee-ee

S. reflexa S. ree-FLEX-ah

S. vulgaris S. vul-GAIR-is

Thalictrum kiusianum

thah-LICK-trum key-use-i-AIN-um

Trachycarpus fortunei

tray-kee-CARP-us for-TUNE-ee-eye

Trillium TRIL-lee-um

Tripetaleia paniculata

try-peh-TALE-ee-uh pan-ick-yew-LATE-ah

Trochodendron aralioides

tro-koe-DEN-dron ah-rail-ee-oh-IDE-ezs

Tsusiophyllum tanakae

sue-sih-o-FIL-um tah-NAKE-ee

Uncinia rubra yew-CIN-ee-uh ROO-bra

Vaccinium ovalifolium

vack-SIN-ee-um o-val-i-FOL-ee-um

V. ovatum V. o-VATE-um

Vancouveria chrysantha

van-koo-VER-ee-uh kri-SAN-tha

V. planipetala V. plan-ee-PET-el-ah

Viola verecunda var. yakusimana

VYE-o-lah vear-ah-KOON-dah var.

va-koo-see-MAN-ah

Vitis vinifera VYE-tus vye-NIF-er-a

Waldsteinia ternata

wald-STINE-ee-uh ter-NATE-ah

Xanthorhiza simplicissima

zan-tho-RIZE-ah sim-PLIS-see-mah

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