



George Landis Arboretum NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

Once again it is my pleasure and privilege to greet all our members and bring you up to date on some of the events of the past year.

As usual, the Friends group of volunteers has been invaluable and I do want to express the Trustees very sincere appreciation for all the help they give to the arboretum. This very newsletter would not be in your hands now were it not for the good services of Margaret Law and Betty Bloom who put in many hours to get it to you. As our one thread of communication, it is enormously important to us all, and we are grateful for the many hours involved.

The Wednesday Weeders (and many other days too!) managed to keep the grounds and garden beds presentable. Many, many volunteers have worked hard and we thank them all, but special thanks to the Bethlehem Garden Club who brought bloom and beauty to the Pig Stye border, and to Kathie Lippitt who has given new life to the Quarry Rock garden.

Our first Annual Fund Drive, organized and chaired by our Treasurer, Paul Blair, was both a delightful occasion and a profitable venture. Funds from this enabled us to employ two workers at the start of the season to help keep the grounds in shape, ably abetted by our tenant Chuck Weed, whose interest and concern are always so helpful.

The new meeting House has served its purpose well, climaxed by the beautiful Fall Flower Show, so imaginatively planned and staged by Evelyn Sturdevan.

We hope for ever increasing use of this facility. The new driveway now offers a solid approach and the building itself provides an ideal setting for group meetings and social functions. A refrigerator, dishwasher, ladies and men rooms, long tables and chairs are all conveniences at the service of renters (The guidelines for renting are elsewhere in this issue). To top it off and thrown in for free, is the breathtaking view of the valley and the opportunity to examine all the arboretum's interesting plantings. Do spread the word that this really unique facility is available and is a most desirable place to meet.

Our horticulture department, so ably headed by Dr. John Abbuhl, is working as hard as possible, with limited funds, to assess, prune, and clear all the plantings, to proceed with listing and labeling everything on the property, and eventually hopes to be able to expand with new plantings. A number of distinguished horticulturists have agreed to serve in an advisory capacity and we are sure their experienced counsel will be very helpful to us.

We are very grateful to Mr. John MacArthur for his helpful legal advice and help.

At our Annual Meeting in May, we elected a group of wonderful new trustees and we are very pleased to have the benefit of their sound advice and interest.

We look forward to a wonderful year ahead, with the prospect of an exciting Second Annual Benefit with the hope of increased funds, and in the knowledge that we have many dedicated and devoted people working with us.

Betty Corning
President

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Plans are just getting underway for our exciting fund raiser. We are proud to have as guest speaker, Mr J.E.Robson, head of Gardens of the National Trust of Scotland. Mr. Lape always proclaimed the Scots were the best gardeners in the world and those who have visited any of the National Trust Gardens in Scotland would agree. The event will take place on March 25th; time and place to be decided on shortly, and information sent out. It promises to be a rare opportunity so save the date.

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The Fall flower show brought new beauty to the Arboretum. The striking arrangements included dried flowers, unusual Japanese designs, and one of all sized apples and straw flowers expressing a real harvest theme. The flower arrangers who had been invited to participate were:

Mrs. Charles Cross	Mrs. George French
Mrs. James Gage	Mrs. Thomas Hawkins
Mrs. John Logan	Mrs. Jean Lynch
Mrs. Max Moravec	Mrs. Merwin Smith
Mrs. Sidney Vunck	

The pumpkin contest was won by Evelyn Sturdevan for the "cutest" pumpkin.

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Our Photo Contest was an extraordinary success. The entries were uniformly good, and we congratulate and thank all those who submitted their fine photos. Our prize winners were:

First & Second Prize - Denis Nadas
Third Prize - Madelyn Econome
Honorable Mention - Madelyn Econome, Grace Mead, Robert Mead, Jack Middleton, and Tom Swinarski

The photo's were on display at our Fall Flower show.

Dwarf Conifers by Betty Bloom

Dwarf conifers are the fad right now - but what a neat fad! They have all the beauty of their parents, the forest giants, but fit comfortably under your windowsill. They're easy to grow, transplant readily, and don't even want particularly good soil. Of course I'm biased, but the only serious problem I can find with them is that my budget requires me to buy young plants and they do remain very small for a long time. You can splurge or convince the wage earner to avoid a transfer for the next decade or so. You can also use my method and plant closely at first with the intention of transplanting half of the plants later. Since they are small, they can be moved very easily even after many years.

Every so often an abnormal growth (a witch's broom) will appear on a normal size conifer. Since this growth is usually healthy, cuttings taken from it often produce dwarf plants that maintain their small congested growth. Occasionally the broom growth will set cones which are smaller than normal and carry very small seeds. According to Welch, approximately half of the resulting seedlings show dwarf characteristics. It is likely that the dwarf plants found in the wild originated from some viable seeds produced by a broom. Although most of the dwarf forms sold today are relatively stable, occasionally there will be a tendency to revert to the parent type. Usually cutting out the more vigorous growth will keep the baby in line.

All of the dwarf conifers described here have been ordered for the rare plant sale in the spring. Others can be seen in the dwarf conifer collection by the library. Take a walk down there and see what some of these dwarfs look like 5 years after planting. Also the City of Albany has a dwarf conifer garden in its planning stages.

Perhaps the best known dwarf conifer is the dwarf alberta spruce (*Picea albertiana conica*), a dense conical bush that can be trimmed to an almost perfect cone. Although it will grow over 6', most specimens will take 20 years to get as large as 4'. This dwarf variety of the white spruce was found in the Canadian Rockies and shipped to the Arnold Arboretum where they were propagated and widely distributed.

Another popular variety is a dwarf form of the Norway Spruce, the Birdsnest spruce (*Picea excelsa nidiformis*). This is a dense spreading plant which grows in such a way that a cone-shaped depression (the bird's nest) is seen in the center of young plants. Although it rarely grows higher than 2', it will spread to a considerable size. As it ages, the center builds up and the "nest" is lost.

A witch's broom growing on a witch's broom? A witch's broom did start growing on a *Nidiformis* and produced the charming little dwarf aptly called 'Little Gem'. It is supposed to be a more bun-shaped plant but similar to the Birdsnest except for size. It is extremely slow growing and one of my favorites.

The Pygmy spruce (*Picea excelsa pygmaea*) is one of the oldest recorded dwarf forms of *Picea abies*. It is a slow growing dense bush that rarely exceeds 3' in height. (Welch, however, does say that it can double that after a century or so of steady growth) It's shape is globose to broadly conical with an irregular branching system which doesn't follow a set pattern.

The Mucronata spruce (*Picea abies excelsa* var *mucronata*) is a larger plant characterized by uniform and regular growth in the form of an upside down cone. This is a strong-growing variety which will get fairly tall (6-8' or more).

Hopefully this brief introduction will whet your appetite for these delightful dwarfs. Do be careful, however, as classification is ragged at best and you may not get what you expect. Some of the "dwarfs" grow into sizeable plants, so try to see actual mature specimens in well-established gardens. Humphrey Welch's book, *Manual of Dwarf Conifers* is great but this Christmas we found that it was out of print. If you can find a copy it is excellent.

Confessions of A Winter Gardener

When I first started indoor gardening, I had only one southwest window available as my source of light. My early success in that small space encouraged me to fill any windows I could claim. Not yet had house plants become a national mania; not yet were fluorescent lit shelves imagined; so my varieties and conditions suffered great limitations. Doggedly, ritualistically, each fall, plants were brought inside to be a joy in November, December, and January, but a chore to tend by February, March, and April. Have I learned a thing in almost forty years? The answer is a resounding "no". By now I have many more unusual types and have turned over a small space to be my plant room with artificial lighting - its controlled sun. I've increased my collection of house plants many times over; my plant room is filled; my window sills are filled; and the pale winter light is filtered through hanging baskets of ferns and ivies. They are still a joy in Nov, Dec, and Jan, and indeed still a chore in Feb, March, and April when I count the days until they can go outside again. Leaves fall, aphids, white fly, scale, and red spider attack; a continual battle is waged. I know I shouldn't bring in some plants fresh from outside. The fuchsia and impatiens that are so full of bloom and healthy looking in the garden are so full of pests that they need spraying, or, perish the thought, elimination. But I cannot turn my back on that lovely window box of color to meet its demise by frost. I don't like the common Spider plant particularly, but I don't want it to suffer a wintry death. I try to give away plants, but somehow each year I have more to take in. Spider plants are like mama cats, always producing; all their little progeny need homes. Well, they are cute when they're little! I've never been able to say no to an offered cutting; indeed, I make my own cuttings for "insurance". So, for example, I now have four Jasmine plants instead of one.

My plants do bring me pleasure; a touch of the rosemary plants in my kitchen window casts a delightful fragrance. My plant room almost always has something in bloom. The *Clivia* left horribly neglected in a cool bedroom sends out multiple stalks of bloom in late winter. Life would be dreary for me without them all.

Renting the Meeting House

The guidelines for renting the Meeting House are as follows:

1. Reservations must be made in advance by calling and subsequently filling out a reservation form.
2. The person signing is responsible.
3. The time limit shall be for half days - circa in the 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. (or later) time period.
4. Fees are \$25 for members, \$35 for non-members for 3 hours, with an additional \$10/hour beyond that.
5. There is a refundable \$50 deposit for cleanup and damage possibilities.

Reservations can be made by telephone 518 875-6935

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All Arboretum members are urged to mark May 17th on their calendars and attend the open annual meeting of the trustees at 2 P.M. that day. It is your chance to ask questions and get to know our new trustees. You are all invited to the regular Friends' meetings held the first Tuesday of each month. On January 6 it will be held at the Turf Tavern in Scotia. If you plan to attend, dinner is at 6:30 and we ask you to please contact Nancy Rexford (tele # 864-5812 after six P.M. or at work # 457-7179) for reservations.

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Friend	\$10-25	
Sponsor	\$25-50	GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
Supporting	\$50-100	
Patron	\$100+	Membership Application

Please support the extensive work of the arboretum and make a tax deductible contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

Phone _____ [] Renewal

Amount _____ [] New

Enclosed _____ Member

THANK YOU

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, free admission to the lecture series and early admission to the annual rare plant sale. Make your checks payable to:

Mail to: GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM
Esperance, NY 12066

Write down on your calendar April 4th as a "Volunteer" day at the Arboretum. We are trying to get a large work force out on that day. You will receive more information later.

It's not too early to remind you that our Rare Plant Sale will be held on May 2, 1987. We will hope to have an impressive group of dwarf conifers as well as many other interesting shrubs and trees. We will have a limited number of Betty Corning Clematis, Dutchess of Albany Clematis and Tangutica Clematis - all three must be ordered in advance from Margaret Law 463-5256. Our next newsletter will offer additional information about this sale.

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Since we work on a calendar year, we will hope to receive your dues for 1987 soon. Please help support your Arboretum!

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