



# George Landis Arboretum Newsletter

Volume 14 • Number 1

Winter 1995

## Growing Wild: Including Native Plants in the Garden



Are Native plants boring pests or elegant additions to the garden? Are gardens composed of native plants easier to maintain? What native plants are suitable for traditional gardens?

If you have been exploring the possibilities of using native plants in your garden be sure to reserve Sunday, April 2, 1995. On that date Gary Koller, Senior Horticulturist at Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, will present a slide-illustrated lecture exploring the myriad uses of native plants in the garden. The Desmond Inn in Albany has again generously offered their space for this important event. The Spring Benefit is one of the major income-producing events for the Landis Arboretum. An additional attraction of the day will be a silent

### Phyllis Rosenblum

auction of items donated in support of the Arboretum by area individuals and businesses. Plants for the home and garden, books, artwork and unique handmade crafts are just a few of the types of items which will be offered.

"Native plants, because they grow on their own in woods and meadows, have long been seen as common and undesirable" explains Koller. "Some American natives have been taken to Europe, refined, and then sent back to us". Goldenrods are one example of this phenomenon.

Using American natives in the garden has taken the horticultural world by storm. Koller believes that the familiarity with and the appreciation of native plants will endure now that gardeners have learned about their unique qualities.

As Senior Horticulturist at the Arnold, Koller now focuses on special projects for the Arboretum as well as providing technical expertise for the horticultural management of the collections. "Arboreta are like a living catalog. In the collections gardeners can find a labeled plant, see how it grows and judge its appearance in all seasons. At an arboretum they have access to

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## Thanks!

### We're making your dollar go farther...

Making the most of our financial resources is a continuing goal at the Arboretum. As our cost of doing business increases we must make adjustments in our day to day operations to continue to conserve our resources. Postal expenses comprise a significant part of our yearly operational budget. With current increases in bulk and first class postal rates we will be changing a number of our operations.

Membership renewals have traditionally been handled on a monthly basis with 3 renewal notices being sent over a 3 month period. Beginning in January, membership renewals will be 2 notices with the final reminder being a phone call. In addition renewal notices will be batched and mailed quarterly to allow us to take advantage of bulk mailing rates. Since the Arboretum newsletter is mailed quarterly, this shift in membership reminder notices should not have any negative impact.

The Arboretum will realize additional savings in production costs associated with our newsletter. In-house layout and underwriting of reproduction will help greatly.

Volunteers continue to be the heart of the GLA. They provide essential services to the Arboretum. These services equalled the approximate equivalent of 1 1/2 full time employees in 1993 & 1994. Donations of needed goods also contributed substantially.

We welcome any suggestions you may have which could help us reach our goals! Please feel free to call the office with your ideas!



# At The Garden

## Director's Report

### The George Landis Arboretum Newsletter

is published quarterly for members of the Arboretum. The GLA's mission is to provide natural history and horticultural education through programs and through its plant collections.

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Slowly, almost imperceptibly the days are lengthening. Winter's solstice is past and the sun is gaining strength. I love the winter with its pristine cool clear air. It is the season where water becomes an art form more than at any other time. The hoar frost in early mornings, the fantastic feathery patterns of ice on windows surpassing any human effort, the sleek and shiny surface of frozen waterways and snow, finally here at last, each flake a perfect sculpture, en masse further formed by the wind into sinuous curves smoothing out all of earth's little irregularities.

Winter is the season to appreciate another aspect of plants. One can appreciate the form of woody plants at this time of year perhaps more than at any other. We can focus now on the subtle colors of reds, browns, grays and yellows in twigs and bark. These attributes are overshadowed, literally, during the leafy season. In the perennial garden the seedheads and resting plants form a winterscape unique to this season. It is a good season to visit an Arboretum, walking trails and planted area become ideal cross country skiing and snowshoeing trails in snow season as you tour the garden.

The Arboretum is fully engaged in a number of endeavors. The first two of the spring related activities, the Members-Only Rare Plant Advance Order and the Member Seed Exchange, are included in this newsletter issue. We hope that our avid gardening audience will find many intriguing plant possibilities. Volunteer Horticulturist Doroyth Clark has headed up the effort for our seed exchange and the physical results of her boundless enthusiasm and energy are well represented in the number of seeds available for trial. Roy's efforts are also evident in the greatly expanded international Seed Exchange List which is

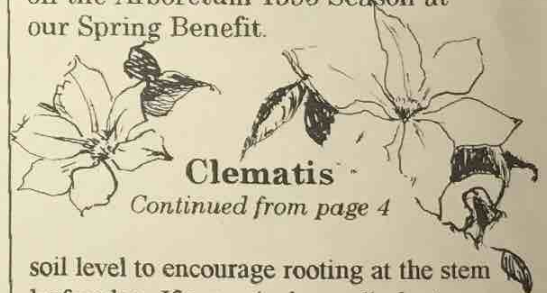
*Pamela H. Rowling*

a cooperative venture between the George Landis Arboretum and SUNY Cobleskill under the direction of Professor Peter Kaskeski.

Edna Lower will no longer be able to serve as volunteer coordinator. We thank her for all of her time and hard work in 1994.

One of the most important activities of winter involves the finalizing of educational programs for the coming season. Education Committee Chairman, Lucinda Willemain and others have been hard at work. The calendar will arrive with the spring issue of the newsletter in April. The Arboretum is fortunate to have George Steele's strong participation in educational programs. In addition to organizing the 1995 Arbor Day Contest he will again be offering programs designed specifically for children and their families throughout the May - October program season.

Enjoy this special wintry season with its unique beauties. I hope that you will join us in April as we kick off the Arboretum 1995 Season at our Spring Benefit.



**Clematis**

*Continued from page 4*

soil level to encourage rooting at the stem leaf nodes. If excessively small plants are purchased they may benefit from an additional year in the pot. The pot should then be plunged in a mulch or soil bed to ensure even soil temperatures and moisture.

The outstanding beauty of *Clematis*, the vast number of cultivars to satisfy every taste in color, floral form, habit, size, blooming time and hardiness, will certainly reward all efforts made to accede to their modest needs. Clematis is a living curtain of color in your garden dream!

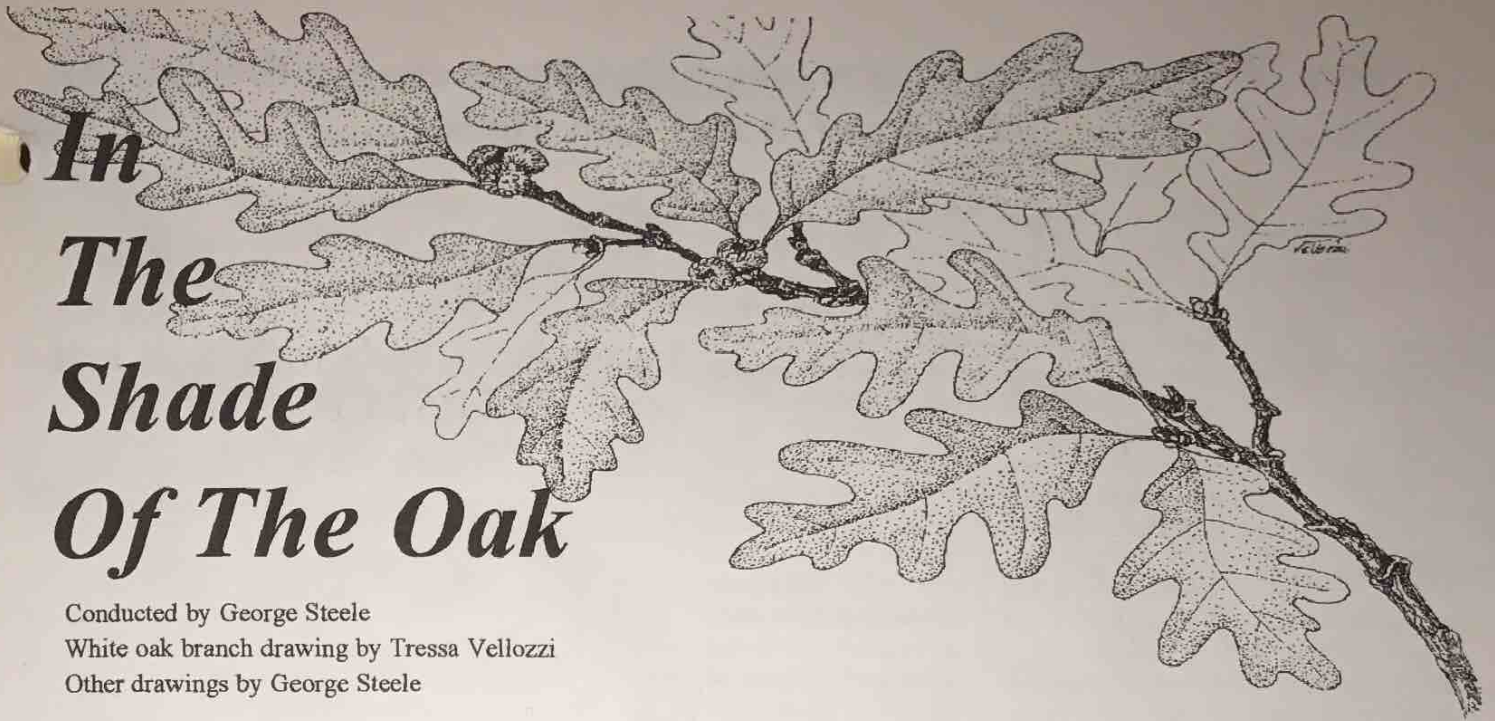


# In The Shade Of The Oak

Conducted by George Steele

White oak branch drawing by Tressa Vellozzi

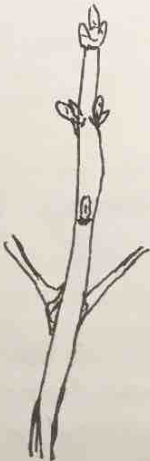
Other drawings by George Steele



## M.A.D. Cap. Horse.

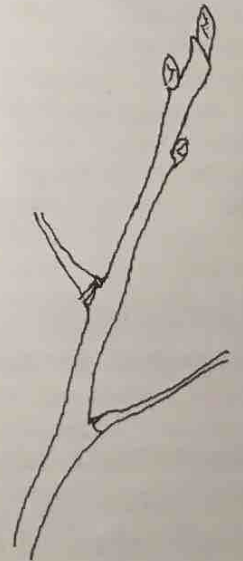
If you ask someone how to identify a tree it's most likely that they'll tell you by their leaves. Some will say bark and a few will say fruit. Not many will say by their buds and leaf scars. Yet for much of the year - the end of October through the beginning of May - there's not much to trees other than their buds, branches and leaf scars.

Here is the first step to begin to be able to identify trees by their buds and leaf scars. Remember "M.A.D. Cap. Horse." or if you wish "M.A.D. Horse. Cap.". This stands for Maple, Ash, Dogwood, Caprifoliaceae and Horsechestnut. The tree species that, for the most part, have opposite growing buds, leaves and branches.



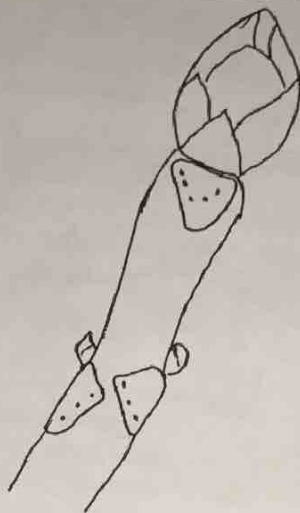
Opposite branching

What is "OPPOSITE"? Look at a branch. Do two side branches grow out from the main branch at the same point, opposite each other? If they do it's OPPOSITE. Be sure to look at several branches on a tree. The branch you're looking at may have had a side branch that was broken off which would leave a scar. If all the branches on the tree grow with only one side branch then the tree is "ALTERNATE".



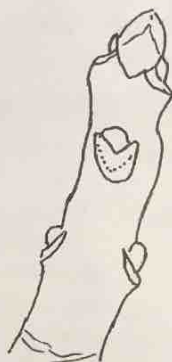
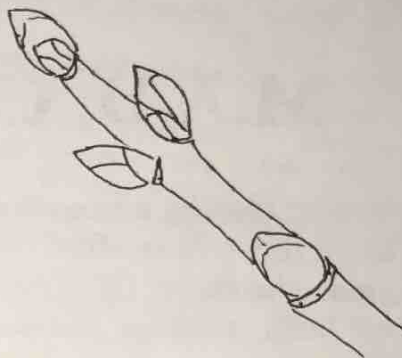
Alternate branching

Here are some helpful hints to narrow down your choices between the members of M.A.D. Cap. Horse.



Large sticky buds with large leaf scars - **HORSECHESTNUT**

Thin, V-shaped leaf scar with three vein scars and the end bud egg or cone shaped - **MAPLE**



Shield or oval leaf scar with many vein scars that look like they form a line - **ASH**

Caprifoliaceae is the family of small trees and shrubs that includes the Viburnums. The dogwoods are in the family Cornaceae. Both groups have OPPOSITE branching.

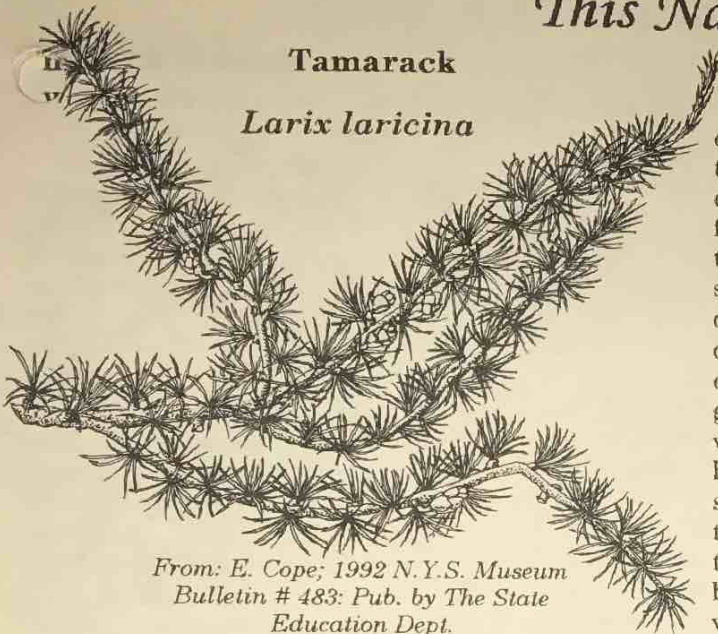
Just to make things confusing REMEMBER "There is NEVER an ALWAYS in nature". You can have some exceptions to the rules above. For example there is an alternate branched dogwood called Alternate-leaf Dogwood. But you're a beginner at tree identification **M.A.D. Cap. Horse.** is a good way to start to learn trees in the winter time when all you have to go on are the buds, branches and leaf scars.



# This Native Plant

Tamarack

*Larix laricina*



From: E. Cope; 1992 N.Y.S. Museum  
Bulletin # 483: Pub. by The State  
Education Dept.

Some species are reminders of past eras when glaciers covered much of North America. The tamarack, *Larix laricina*, also known as hackmatack or American, black or red larch, moved into exposed areas when the glaciers receded. The glaciers had scoured the hills and valleys, disturbing water drainage patterns and thereby creating lakes. The lakes with the poorest drainage became acid and provided the niche for some very special species--tamarack, black spruce, sphagnum moss, sedges and carnivorous plants. Only species that could adapt to the hazardous conditions in the developing bog survived. The acid and cold waters limited the absorption of water and nutrients, especially nitrogen. In spite of the fact that the roots are in water the plants have to adapt to desert-like conditions.

In the bog ecosystem, the tamarack becomes a dominant member of the landscape. It moves out on the sphagnum moss mats that grow over the water gradually closing off the entire lake, leaving the water trapped beneath a blanket of vegetation. On occasion, passing woolly mammoths were deceived by the moss-based landscape only to break through the mat to their ultimate

demise. Gradually the lake fills with dead moss and debris from above. The tamarack and other species characteristic of the ecosystem become the only evidence of the former glacial lake. In view of its origins, it becomes understandable why this truly wild species the tamarack refuses to be tamed. Few cultivars exist. To appreciate the species

one must simulate or visit its native habitat.

The tamarack is native primarily to the taiga vegetation zone sandwiched between the tundra of the northern polar regions and the mid-latitude deciduous forests. Some disjunct distributions, remnants of the ice age, exist in cold swamps in southwest Pennsylvania, western Maryland, Northern Virginia and western Ohio. At higher elevations and the northern part of its range the tamarack will exist on drained hillsides and mountain peaks. The species is found throughout New York State and is our only native deciduous conifer.

Eleven species of *Larix* are found in the Northern Hemisphere. In appearance, they are all very similar, but some species other than our native tamarack adapt well to cultivation. All of the species are deciduous and provide a golden touch to the fall landscape after the maples have lost their leaves. The larches are attractive at all seasons, especially in the spring when they burst forth with lovely red-purple cones, like rosebuds, and soft needle clusters.

The Tamarack grows to 80 feet, with a one to two foot diameter. The tall straight trees provide a

Sonja Javarone

conical profile with pendulous branches that are retained to ground level. The leaves are about one inch long with a soft blue-green color. The male cones are yellow. The female cones, on 3rd year shoots are red-purple and erect before pollination, followed by a green and pendulous stage and ending when mature, with brown and erect cones. The adult leaves form clusters of 12 to 50 needles. The cones are 2 centimeters or less, and glabrous. The branchlets are brown.

Humans and wildlife have discovered some of the virtues of the tamarack. Grouse and other birds eat the seeds, deer browse the branchlets and snowshoe rabbits eat the leaves. The bark contains tannin and has been used for processing leather. Shipbuilders seek out the "knees" formed when the roots curve in response to hardpan or rock layers. The heavy hard and strong wood is used for telephone poles, railroad ties, fenceposts and other sites where a weather resistant wood is required. Native Americans used split roots to thread birch bark together for canoes.

The larch sawfly, a native of Europe was first sighted in Massachusetts in the 1880's. The larvae feed in groups on foliage in the upper crowns, stripping branches. Serious outbreaks have occurred in eastern Canada, the Great Lakes Region and Minnesota leaving stands of decimated trees. New growth is coming back, however.

Some of our recent winters have led some to speculate whether the glaciers are coming back. We may have to seek real estate in the Sahara, but the tamarack, which exists in a waterlogged environment at temperatures to -79 degrees F. will opportunistically challenge the advancing ice sheet.





# Garden Exotica

## Clematis: A Garden Dream

The garden of my dreams is luxuriant, brimming with life and light, softened with shadow and decay. An essential part of my garden fantasy involves vines: great soft blankets to cloak harsh architectural features and to create a flow of line from the upright to the procumbent.

The genus *Clematis* includes approximately 250 species of erect perennial herbs and woody vining plants climbing by clasping petioles. They are to be found growing wild in many of the temperate areas of the world including Europe, the British Isles, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Americas. The genus *Clematis* is a member of the Buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) which includes many popular plants used in cultivated gardens (Peony, Monkshook, Larkspur, Columbine, Hellebore etc). The leaves are opposite and depending on the species being discussed, either entire (simple) or pinnately compound (featherlike). An interesting feature of the blooms of *Clematis* is that they have no petals. The colorful floral parts which are the glory of this genus are botanically sepals. There are many pistils and stamens.

The mass of stamens contribute substantially to the floral effect of the plant. In many species and hybrids the mature fruit (achene) which is a single seed bearing a long tail, often covered with silken hairs. These hairy clusters of tails are responsible for the common appellation of some species of 'old man's beard' and extend the *Clematis*' garden season.

Until recently it was typical to group *Clematis* by the parent prominent in their breeding i.e. lanuginosa type, florida type etc. There have been so much cross breeding that these groupings have become practically meaningless. A new and useful classification system has been devised by Dr. John Howells (Growing Clematis; Ward Lock pub. London). "*Clematis* are divided into two groups; Group I, large flowered clematis, and Group II, small flowered clematis." Group I is further divided into those which flower early (on last years wood) and those that flower late (wood of the current year). Group II is divided into

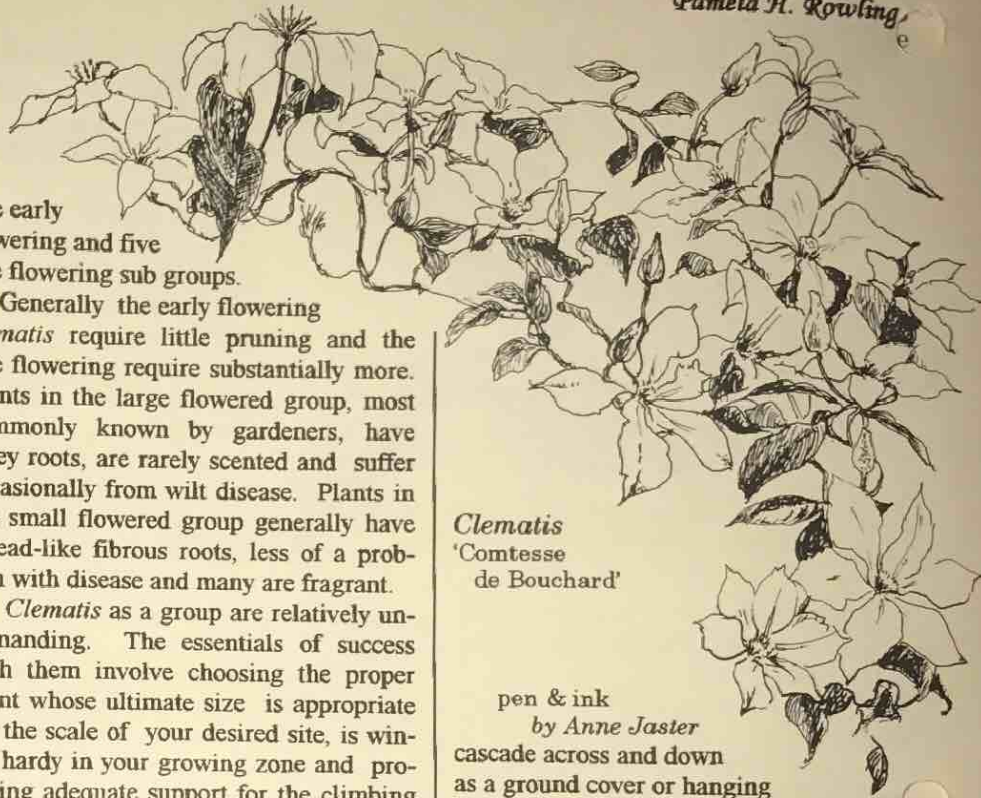
five early flowering and five late flowering sub groups.

Generally the early flowering *clematis* require little pruning and the late flowering require substantially more. Plants in the large flowered group, most commonly known by gardeners, have lacey roots, are rarely scented and suffer occasionally from wilt disease. Plants in the small flowered group generally have thread-like fibrous roots, less of a problem with disease and many are fragrant.

*Clematis* as a group are relatively undemanding. The essentials of success with them involve choosing the proper plant whose ultimate size is appropriate for the scale of your desired site, is winter hardy in your growing zone and providing adequate support for the climbing types. Soil pH, soil moisture and exposure to sunlight and wind are further variables requiring consideration. *Clematis* vary greatly in height from 3 inches in the case of a diminutive species from New Zealand to 40 feet or more as represented by some *C. montana* varieties. For success at low temperatures the local native species can be grown (*C. virginiana*). Other species particularly *C. alpina*, *C. macropetala*, *C. recta* are notably hardy. Many of the late flowering species *C. orientalis*, *C. tangutica*, *C. viticella* can be grown and cut practically to the ground for the winter. The protected roots should survive in good shape. A number of the larger flowering cultivars have performed well in cold climates including 'Victoria', 'Hagley Hybrid', 'Jackmanii', 'Perle d'Azur', 'Niobe', 'Gipsy Queen', 'Comtesse de Bouchard' and 'Ville de Lyon'.

The climbing types of *Clematis* can be displayed in a multitude of ways from architectural supports (pergolas, trellises, fences etc.), planted adjacent to and threaded through companion shrubs and small trees as they would be found in nature or unsupported and left to

Pamela H. Rowling



*Clematis*  
'Comtesse  
de Bouchard'

pen & ink  
by Anne Jaster  
cascade across and down  
as a ground cover or hanging  
plant. If ascendance is desired there is  
only one essential component in addition  
to structurally adequate support and that  
is to provide small enough gauge points  
of attachment for the plant. As refer-  
enced the plant climbs by twining the  
petioles of its leaves around the support.  
A support that is too broad will not allow  
clasping by the petiole.

Generally *Clematis* thrives in the kind of soil gardeners love to stick their hands in, moist but well drained, friable loam. A near neutral pH is best but except for cases of extreme acidity, adequate soil moisture at all times is more essential. These plants are relatively heavy feeders and soils possessing a certain amount of clay and organic matter are preferred. Organic mulches placed over the roots of the plants help to retain soil moisture, provide slowly released nutrients as a by product of their decay, and are highly beneficial. Container grown plants can be planted at any time the soil moisture is correct (not too wet), spring is preferred. Plants should be placed in a prepared planting hole and set at approximately 4 inches below original  
*Continued on page 2*



# Garden Forum

## Buying Plants for Landscape Planting

Tom Burbine

As we spend the time this winter looking through nursery and gardening catalogs we frequently dream of the planting season ahead in regards to putting some new plants into the landscape or renovating an established planting. Here are some points to consider:

1. Start with a plan, especially if you are doing a new landscape planting or renovating an established planting. This will help you determine the exact number of plants needed to complete the landscape design. This will also help you budget your landscape needs over a short or long term planting period.

2. Don't forget plant hardiness, especially cold temperature hardiness, when selecting woody plant materials. The winter of 93-94 brought this factor to our attention with wide scale winter injury or winter kill to thousands of plant materials in the Great Northeast. The Arboretum can help you determine whether or not your plants are usefully hardy in this region. They have many plant references and have many woody plants on site that you can evaluate yourself in regards to cold temperature hardiness and how the plants perform in our region of New York State. Also, check the plant materials around your neighborhood. This will give you a good idea as to what plants will grow in your area and their adaptability to your planting site.

3. Soils are very important in the selection of plant material. They will vary from one area to another, and can be the most limiting factor affecting plant growth. Information on soils can be obtained through Soil Survey books. Your county Soil and Water Conservation District Office can help you determine the soils on your property along with providing useful information on soil drainage techniques if they are needed.

4. Insect and disease pests should also be considered in buying plant material for they can also be a limiting factor in deciding what plants you want for your landscape plan. There are more plants being introduced in the nursery trade that are showing disease and some insect resistance. You may want to invest in some of these new plant materials for long term planting and a reduction on plant maintenance activities. Salt tolerance and deer resistance may also be considered when selecting plants. Cornell Cooperative Extension has references that can help you deal with these potential problems.

5. In buying plants, you have a wide choice of local or area nurseries and garden centers. They can be very helpful in making the final decision as to what plants to buy for your landscape design. Catalogs can be very helpful for they can give you a lot of useful information in terms of plant hardiness and good descriptions of plant characteristics. If buying plants through catalogs keep in mind shipping costs, plant size and the fact that it may take time to reach the height and spread of the plant as shown in the reference.

6. An important point to keep in mind when selecting plants is that it should be a well thought out process; when you place a plant in the ground to grow you are making a long term investment in plant material. These investments will grow with time provided that you take the time to properly plant and maintain them.

**A Special thanks to**  
Timothy Fredricks &  
Bill Kowalski - for heating system  
repairs  
and to  
Anne & Wayne B'Rells - our  
computer gurus, for all their help  
with our computer systems!

## Growing Wild

continued from page 1

information about that plant". The plant information is one of the essential features which differentiates arboreta from parks and other public gardens, he emphasizes.

Mr. Koller is also well known for his contributions to both scientific and popular horticultural publications. His monograph *Chaenomeles 'Mandarin'* appeared in the winter issue of *Arnoldia*, the quarterly botanical journal published by the Arnold Arboretum. A popular article entitled "Gold-leaved Plants Keep the Hues of Spring" appeared in the October 1994 issue of *Fine Gardening Magazine*.

A teacher, as well as a plantsman, Mr. Koller has served on the faculty of Harvard's Graduate School of Design for many years, teaching courses on the many aspects of garden design. This year he will be lecturing as part of the Radcliffe Seminars at Harvard.

Mr. Koller provides garden design and installation services to private homeowners through his company Koller and Associates.

We hope that you will be able to join us for this special presentation. It will be an excellent opportunity to learn from an expert in the field, meet new horticultural friends, perhaps find a special auction item to take home and certainly not least in importance show your support for the George Landis Arboretum, your local information source. For additional information please call the Arboretum at 875-6935.

### Wish List:

Maybe you have just what we are looking for! As always your donations are greatly appreciated!! The following is a list of things needed:

**Bookcases**  
**Gra, hics materials**  
**Projector Stand**  
**& of course, Voluteers for**  
**many Spring time projects**  
**starting soon!**



# How Does Our Garden Grow ?

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Dave Vermilyea - *Surge  
protector for computer*  
Bill Vetter - *2 Trash cans*  
Thomas Baker - *Dust Buster*  
Power Technologies, Inc. -  
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John Abbuhl - *Fencing*  
Pamela Rowling - *Lotus  
Program*  
Genevieve Haniquet - *Books*

Winter will be  
coming to a close  
sooner than we think  
and it will be time to  
reopen the

### Acorn Shop!

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a volunteer in the shop  
1 or 2 Saturdays or  
Sundays between April  
and October?

Manning the shop is fun, the  
surroundings are pleasant &  
you may even meet some new  
friends.

Call office 875-6935



# Annual Appeal Update!

Board of Trustees and the Arboretum staff offer a special *Thank You* to the following people in appreciation for their generous support of the Arboretum! There have been 129 donations from members totaling \$11,922.00 & 94 new members (\*) whose donations totaled \$3,081.00. That makes a grand total of \$ 15,053.00!

& Kay Abbuhl  
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 en Affinito \*  
 & Mrs. E.H. Ahrens  
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# Gardens to Visit

Lucinda Willemain

## Jackson's Garden

Most long time residents of this area have been to Jackson's Garden on the Union College campus. Some people visit annually. The formal design of this garden makes it a special treat. Elements of design which are often described in landscape design books can be seen here as nowhere else in this area.

Union College celebrates its bicentennial this year. It is the oldest college campus laid out by a landscape designer. The design plan of the campus can be seen in a more condensed form in the garden, which is a much shorter walk than the campus as a whole.

Captain Isaac Jackson was a mathematics professor who developed the portion of the campus now known as Jackson's Garden. About 20 years after the original campus design was created, he took up the project in his spare time to improve his health.

The walk may take about two hours. Parking is not far from an entrance to the garden. The grade up and down hill is not too steep for relaxed walking, and paths are handicapped accessible. There are benches to rest on along the way. To see the entrance at its best, you may want

to begin at the sixteen sided Nott Memorial Building. At this garden entrance you will pass a statue of former U.S. president Chester Arthur, flanked by two spectacular lace bark pines. This grouping lends a distinct dimension to what designers call the "sense of place" of the garden you are about to see.

The garden is enclosed by low wooded slopes. Its seclusion from the campus makes it a place of refuge for the visitors as well as for the birds and squirrels. Special sections include formal perennial beds, the Robison herb garden (formal), VanVost Evergreen Garden (not so formal), Levine Wildflower Garden (informal). A long low meadow is bordered by a stream, and a glade that makes a classroom sized "garden room" that is filled with the pleasant noise of the running water. In addition to an instructive contrast between formal and informal design there are several "garden rooms" of various sizes to accommodate the various sized groups one might expect on a campus, for example courting couples or class reunions.

You may notice that the stone walls here are built square on top and sides,

more formal than the farm field walls of the arboretum. Even in the woods, they are arranged in geometrical curves. The Robison Herb Garden connects the formal garden design to the architecture of the student center. By climbing the stairs here, the herb garden may be viewed from above. Incidentally, the stone forming the raised beds in this garden contains fossils.

Plant lovers will not want to miss the 100 year old Ginkgo tree or the venerable collection of tree peonies which will be blooming in June. Plant specimens on the edge of hardiness in zone 5 do better in Jackson's Garden's protected environment than at the Arboretum.

### General Information

**Open:** To the public without pre-arrangement

**Hours:** Dawn to Dusk

**Admission:** Free

**Directions:** Park at the visitors lot at the corner of Nott Street. & Seward Place. NW corner of Union College Campus.

**Information:** Contact the Campus Publications Office for a copy of the brochure with the plant location map weekdays until 4:30 p.m. year round.

George Landis Arboretum  
Lape Road  
Esperance, NY 12066

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