



The Big Oak

George Landis Arboretum

Newsletter

Lape Road

Winter 1996

Esperance, New York

Vol. 15, No. 1



New Director Begins Work

Gloria Van Duyne's duties as the arboretum's new director officially began on January 2, but actually she was at work during part of December to become familiar with ongoing and future arboretum projects, office procedures, and volunteers.

Most recently, Gloria worked as Media Coordinator, a temporary position, for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). In that position she was responsible for the development and execution of the marketing campaign for New York State's first conservation license plate (shown in the photo).

From 1992 to 1994 she worked as administrative assistant with the New York Parks and Conservation Association, a non-profit citizens organization that works to protect state parks, provide technical assistance to communities and develops greenways and heritage corridors. Here, Gloria received training in grant and proposal writing, and experience in program development, volunteer coordination, budgeting and fundraising.

Gloria's academic training includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from SUNY and a Master's in Resource Management and Administration from Antioch University in New Hampshire. Related volunteer experience includes membership coordination of wildlife programs for the Audubon Society of New York State and preparation of educational displays and public information for DEC.

We look forward to a mutually satisfying association.

Bus Trip: Boston Flower Show

The arboretum is sponsoring a bus trip to the New England Flower Show in Boston on Wednesday, March 13. "Celebration!" is this year's theme and marks the 125th anniversary of the show.

This is your opportunity to "leave the driving to us" and celebrate the coming of spring at the world's third largest flower show. View five-and-a-half acres of gardens, shop New England's largest Garden Marketplace, attend lectures and demonstrations, and enjoy a relaxing luncheon buffet.

Cost of the trip is \$45 for GLA members and \$50 for non-members. The fee includes round trip bus fare, flower show admission, and a return trip snack. An optional luncheon buffet is an additional \$9.95; advance reservations are necessary. The bus will leave from Wade Tours at 797 Burdeck Road at 7:40 a.m. and at 8 a.m. from Crossgates Mall. We will return about 7 p.m. See the registration form at the bottom of page 6 with the Advance Plant Sale order form. You will receive an information packet when you register.

Special Thanks!

To **Bill Kowalski**, member and electrician, for donating a long day of labor to rewire between the house and barn; to **James and Maryanne Southgate** for a donation to the perennial garden fund; to **G.E Computer Center** for a generous donation; to **Claire Schmitt** for a donation of Oriental lily bulbs; to **Leila Salmon and Steve Young**, non-trustees, who served on the Search Committee; and to **Paul Basile, Betty Lou Baily, Samuel Katz and Donald E. Schein** for donations to the Endowment Fund.

From the Board of Trustees - Carol Wock

At the arboretum, excitement is in the air! We are delighted to welcome our new director and we find her energy and enthusiasm infectious. On the evening of December 11, members of the board gave a reception to welcome Gloria. We now invite our members to get acquainted with Gloria and to add to our welcome.

We are gratified by **recent accomplishments** and the renewed energy they have produced. The deteriorated wiring between house and barn has been replaced, barn cleanup is under way, and paper recycling has begun. All of our bookkeeping is computerized, and membership data has been moved from our oldest to our newest and most efficient computer.

Work has continued on both grants. The 1995 ZBGA (Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums) grant has provided new signs throughout the arboretum, and has funded our first full-color "rack" or "insert" brochure and a two-color visitor's guide containing a greatly improved map. Both brochures have been professionally printed. The ZBGA grant also provided funding to pay for data entry needed for the IMS grant. Recently we were given a year's extension to finish the IMS Survey grant.

We were recently awarded a Community Cultural Grant administered by the Schoharie County Arts Council with public funds provided by the New York State Council on the Arts. The grant, written by Trustee Claudia McLaughlin, will support a concert by Dick Solberg, the Sun Mountain Fiddler and his band, to be held at the arboretum on August 24.

Also, the arboretum recently received a generous donation from the GE Computer Center. The money was raised by their office recycling efforts; we were selected as recipient because of our environmental emphasis.

New initiatives have brought us unanticipated recognition. This year, for the first time, we had a tree in the Festival of Trees at the Albany Institute of History and Art holiday show. The tree, decorated by volunteer Mary D'Alessandro, received a great deal of attention; a full page article in the *Schenectady Gazette* chose ours as the only tree to be fully photographed. At the end of the Festival, Mary packed up the tree, brought it to the Acorn Shop, and put it up again for the enjoyment of staff and visitors. We appreciate the recognition that Mary's elegant tree brought to us.

On November 3, Dr. Richard Lighty, Director of the Mt. Cuba Center for the Study of Piedmont Flora and a prominent figure in American horticulture, spent the entire day with trustees to assess the arboretum and its collection. (See p. 3 for a review of his recommendations.) His services were funded by a MAP II (Museum Assessment Program) grant. His written report will help us initiate our master planning process this winter.

Our last newsletter generated more notice than we could have anticipated. Many calls and letters have been received from readers who commented favorably on both its content and format.

The arboretum trustees have been very much a **working board**. Helping in the office have been Anne Jaster, Lucinda Willemain, and Claudia McLaughlin. Lucinda, Claudia, and Frank Gilmore contributed articles for the last newsletter; John Abbuhl is an author for this newsletter. Frank made the drawing on the letterhead used in our annual appeal letter. Dave Vincent transfer red data from one computer to another. Trustees McLaughlin and Gilmore served on the search committee. Trustee Carl Salmon gave moral support and wise counsel in the search process. Trustee Janet Tissiere is helping to develop materials for use in seeking

THE GEORGE LANDIS ARBORETUM NEWSLETTER

is published quarterly for its members. The arboretum's mission is to provide natural history and horticultural education through its programs and through its plant collection.

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Ray Perry, Gloria Van Duyne

Printer

infographics

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underwriting. Most of the above were joined by Trustee Pieter Kien in spending a day with Dr. Lighty. Anne Jaster has worked to get brochures ready to print. Thanks to all these efforts, the past months have proved to be a period of creativity and productivity for the board and the arboretum. - Carol Wock, President

Arboretum Assessment

In early November Dr. Richard Lighty, internationally recognized botanic garden and arboretum specialist, and Director of the Mt. Cuba Center for the Study of Piedmont Flora, located in the Brandywine Valley, spent a day visiting the Landis Arboretum collections and physical facilities and talking with each board member. His recommendations, briefly reviewed here, will be a part of the master planning process to begin soon. The report is available at the arboretum office for the information of members. Dr. Lighty's visit was funded by a Museum Assessment Program grant. - Ed.

Dr. Lighty recognized that the board desires broad guidance in the process of master planning as it relates to the plant collection. In particular, advice was being sought on how the collection may be developed to best serve the programs the arboretum offers its audience. He stressed the need to decide which collections and which landscapes are necessary to the arboretum mission.

He states that "The principal dilemma for the arboretum is the pressing need for funding at a time when the purposes and programs have not been clearly decided upon."

In the master planning process, the board of trustees, keeping in mind the purposes for which the arboretum was chartered, must decide what programs are needed to meet both the founder's wishes and the overall objectives of the arboretum. The collection must be assessed for its relevance to these programs, and a determination made of the staff necessary to support the collections and landscapes supportive of those programs. They must re-address and re-formulate the collections policy to support a simplified and focused intent, to establish a policy which will guide and shape both the arboretum's beautiful natural landscape, future additions to it, and the day-to-day maintenance of it.

Then, with a clear focus, meaningful and vigorous financial development must be addressed.

Dr. Lighty also urges completion of the survey and identification of the collection, provision of secure record storage, evaluation of the library and herbarium, a review of security measures, and development of programs that may recruit members, volunteers, and raise funds.

Winter Birding at the Arboretum

Ray Perry & Gloria Van Duyn

The arboretum is home, seasonally and year around, to a multitude of birds. Even though temperatures may be unfriendly, winter is a terrific time to watch and identify birds; some species are actually more common here during the colder months.

Most people who feed birds in their own yards will recognize the Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch. The Red-breasted Nuthatch, more common in this area in winter, is smaller than the white-breasted species, but also climbs up, down and around tree trunks and branches, searching for insects and larvae. Other species that search for food in this way include the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and, less common in winter, the Northern Flicker, and the Pileated Woodpecker which will chisel rectangular holes in its search for bugs.

Bluebirds and American Robins can be found here in winter. You may see robins, just before dark, flocking to roost in conifers. If you see Cedar Waxwings which prefer berries, as robins do, look for the rare Bohemian Waxwing which sometimes travels with the more common species.

House Finches are seen year around but the Purple Finch is more plentiful in winter as are Evening and Pine Grosbeaks. It is expected that this year will be good for winter birds. Reports from farther north say they are seeing winter birds moving through earlier than usual. This means we

are more likely to see more of the species that usually winter north of here, but will move farther south if their food supplies are low in their regular wintering areas.

Two species associated with winter and found at the arboretum are the Dark-eyed Junco, commonly called "snow bird" and the American Tree Sparrow which is sometimes referred to as the "winter chipper."

This is a great year for Wild Turkeys, partly because rabies killed a lot of raccoons that love to eat turkey eggs. It is common to see flocks of 20 to 30 and possible to see a hundred or more.

Predators you may see or hear at the arboretum include the Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Screech and Great-horned Owls. The Northern Shrike, more common in winter here, impales its prey, small birds and large insects, on the thorns of trees and shrubs.

Other species you may see are: Brown Creeper, American Crow, Mourning Dove, Rock Dove, American Goldfinch, Ruffed Grouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskin, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, European Starling, Hermit Thrush and Winter Wren.

If you decide to birdwatch at the arboretum, bring a good pair of binoculars and a field guide - and note what you see in the log at the visitor's information shed next to the parking lot. Other birders are interested in knowing what you have seen.

Ray Perry is member and past president of the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club.

WISH LIST

A good vacuum - one with good suction, a vacuum that really works!

A volunteer and/or materials (such as weather stripping and caulking) - to winterize the farmhouse.



Gardens to Visit

Margaret Law

With area gardens dormant under the snow, we will make an armchair visit to South Africa and Zimbabwe as part of a Brooklyn Botanic Garden tour taken by Margaret Law, a long-time arboretum member.

Spring flowers were the feature of a September trip to the other side of the equator. In Johannesburg, our first stop, Keith Kirsten's garden and nursery held many favorites - azaleas, primroses, pansies, violets, and daffodils, and among semi-tropical plants a choice yellow-flowering clivia, Bird-of-paradise (*Strelitzia*) and calla lilies. We were to see many of the more common clivia, both orange and white, strelitzia and calla lilies all over South Africa.

At Capetown's lovingly tended Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, founded 80 years ago and located on the eastern slope of Table Mountain, we were introduced to cycads and proteas and a vast collection of rare and endangered plants indigenous to the region. Proteas are named for the Greek god Proteus who was able to change his shape at will, and the name is an indication of the diversity found in the genus. The flower head is an inflorescence with numerous crowded sessile flowers - they seem too unusual to be real. Cycads have been called South Africa's living fossils. They are cone-bearing plants with a palm-like appearance; male and female plants are separate and can only be identified when they form cones.

"Fynbos" is an Afrikaans word meaning "fine bush" and is commonly applied to

many narrow-leaved plants found at Kirstenbosch. There were many varieties of the Heath Family whose flowers come in many colors, shapes and sizes, and many Pelargoniums (geraniums), some 200 species growing wild in South Africa. More easily recognized were members of the Mesembryanthemum, Gazania, Felicia and Helichrysum Families. The grass under our feet seemed so exceptionally soft that we asked about it; it was "Buffalo grass" that grows strong horizontal spears so each step is well-cushioned.

One day we visited "Oude Nektar" (Old Nectar) the home of elderly Mrs. Una Vander Spuy who showed us through her house and garden including a knot garden with roses lining the paths, fountains and pool. That afternoon we spent at Stellenbosch University where the horticulture department is working to develop a yellow geranium.

Not a botanic garden *per se*, but our next destination was a field reached by a dirt road near Darling, a small town in the Cape area. An extraordinary sight. Acres of wildflowers growing so thickly it was impossible to take a step without harming one - nemesis, ixia, oxalis, freesias, pimpernels, *Gladiolus altus*, Blue flax (not the one we know), a striking purple and pink flower called Wine Cup (*Geissorhiza*), a multitude of tiny sundews and many others, including the sun-loving daisies of various families. (One of our guides, when asked to identify yet another flower, said "It's ADYD," the humorous answer, usually to their peers, "another damn yellow daisy.") We stopped briefly at a flower show in Darling, run by the Wild Flower Society, where all flowers are identified, picked only by license and exhibited not only for

their beauty but for educational purposes. Along the road, growing as weeds, were purple statice and calla lilies.

Another day we visited the Karoo National Botanic Garden to see the desert-like plants indigenous to that area - curious cacti, aloes and stone plants. *Haworthia* is at home there - the same plant on a larger scale that I bought at a GLA plant sale a few years ago. We visited the Harold Porter Garden, 400 acres in size, stretching from the mountains to the sea, with proteas and ericas in bloom.

I haven't written about trees and shrubs - miles of flowering jacaranda line the streets in some cities. There were also the strange sausage trees, baobabs and many acacias. Too, there were *Azelia quanzensis*, whose padded seeds resemble our chicken-corn candy; *Schizolobium*, popularly called "the Feather duster tree" or "Sky's-the-limit" tree because of its shape and immense height; *Bauhinia*, known as "Camel's foot" because of its twin-lobed leaves shaped like a camel's footprint; and undoubtedly the most remarkable, *Encephalartos woodii*, a cycad considered extinct until one was found in the Ngoye Forest in 1895. It was a male and can be propagated asexually only.

It was a memorable trip filled with botanic delights... unusual birds... animals in the wild.....

But enough! - Margaret Law

Prayer of the Tree

I am the heat of your hearth
on cold winter nights,
the friendly shade screening you from
the summer sun,
and my fruits are refreshing draughts
quenching your thirst as you journey on.

I am the beam that holds up your house,
the board of your table,
the bed on which you lie,
and the timber that builds your boat.

I am the handle of your hoe,
the wood of your cradle,
and the shell of your coffin.
I am the bread of kindness
and the flower of beauty.

Ye who pass by,
listen to my prayer
harm me not.

Origin and author are unknown. The translations are many.

A SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE 1996 CALENDAR

Special Events:

Evenings with Larry Sombke, The Natural Gardener

Star of WAMC's Vox Pop gardening show, Consultant, Author of *Beautiful Easy Gardens, Beautiful Easy Flower Gardens, and Beautiful Easy Lawns and Landscapes*

January 22, 1996 - Schenectady Unitarian Church
1221 Wendell Avenue

February 26 - Cobleskill Cooperative Extension
41 South Grand Street

April 29 - Location to be announced

The charge for each evening is \$4 for arboretum members, \$6 for non-members.

Stargazing at the Arboretum

April 21 and 22, 9 p.m. - More to be announced in future newsletters

Rare Plant Sale - May 18 & 19, at the arboretum

The Sun Mountain Fiddler - August 24, at the arboretum

Bus Trips

March 13 - Boston Flower Show (details and reservation form in this newsletter)

April (date to be announced) - Wildflowers and Waterfalls
A visit to area waterfalls with members Steve Young and Laura Lehtonen
(Details in the next newsletter.)

May 1 & 2 - The Brandywine Valley
This trip will include an overnight stay of at least one night, and will feature a visit to the Mt. Cuba Center for the Study of Piedmont Flora.
Trips to other area gardens are being planned.

May 23 - Tree Peony Trip, Cricket Hill (near Litchfield), Connecticut

The April newsletter will contain a complete Calendar of Events and full details for the April and May trips.

How Does Our Garden Grow?

New Members, 4th Quarter through 12-14-95 - Please note that the names listed here are new members only. Beginning with this issue, we welcome new members only; a complete list of members and contributors will be included with the Annual Report once each year.

Marie Burnet
John and Dorothy Carlic
Fiona Farrell
Jack Fayssoux
Robert & Trinidad Gilmore
Mary Hamm

Dr. John Heimke
Sarah P. Ingalls
Roy Korn, Jr.
Carol McGuire
Ed Mintiens
Barbara O'Shea-Gray

James Paley, Jr.
Ellen M. Redling
R. Carsten & Rosemary Sibbern
Patricia Smith
Jeffrey & Sally Stern
Dana & Francois Vedier

John Welkar
Margaret & James Wolffe
Ellen & Ronald Wroczynski

1996 Rare Plant Sale

Members' Advance Order Catalog

The garden catalogues are arriving regularly, inspiring all gardeners to dream about and plan for the coming growing season. To assist in your dreaming and planning, we have prepared a list of plants for our annual members' advance order. Many of the following selections are natives or cultivars of native plants. We have also selected many plants which have won the prestigious Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's annual Gold Medal Plant Award. The PHS winners are marked with an asterisk.

Native Groundcovers

Andromeda polifolia 'Compacta' (Bog-rosemary) — Low growing shrub to 12". Blue-green leathery evergreen foliage with prolific, light pink flowers in late April. Likes acid, peaty soil with plenty of moisture. (Zone 3)

1 gal. 8-10" \$12.00

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (Bearberry, Kinikinick) — A reliable ground cover, which will tolerate poor, sandy soil. No more than 12" high, the evergreen foliage turns reddish brown in autumn. Red berries persist through much of the winter. (Zone 3)

1 gal. 8-10" \$12.00

Cornus canadensis (Bunchberry) — A low-growing, clump-forming woodland plant. It has the typical white dogwood blossoms, red fall fruits and red fall foliage. Prefers partial shade.

\$12.00

Gaultheria procumbens (Creeping Wintergreen) — An attractive, compact evergreen ground cover. Persistent bright-red edible berries with a wintergreen flavor. (Zone 3)

1 gal. 6-8" \$13.00

Evergreen Shrubs & Trees

**Abies nordmanniana* (Nordmann Fir) — A fairly fast growing fir, to 50'. Needles are a rich, dark green. Similar to a Fraser Fir, but tolerates heat, humidity and drought; would have done well during the summer of 1995! Trees offered are potted 3-year transplants. (Zone 4)

\$5.00

Ilex glabra 'Compacta' (Compact Inkberry) — A hardy evergreen, tighter branching than the species. Makes a good hedge with its upright, mounded form. Tolerates salt spray. (Zone 5)

2 gal. 12-15" \$18.50

Kalmia latifolia — These are hybrids of our native Mountain-laurel. *Kalmia* flowers well in full shade, partial sun and full sun. All are Zone 5. Each available in two sizes:

1 gal. 8" \$13.00
2 gal. 12-15" \$26.00

- ◆ 'Olympic Fire' — Upright and dense with broad, thick leaves. Flower buds are bright red and open pink. The best *Kalmia* for bud/flower contrast, foliage color and leaf sheen.
- ◆ 'Pink Globe' — A compact grower with distinctive olive-green foliage. Flowers are pink in bud and corolla and form an extra large truss. Plant is a mound of pink when it flowers.
- ◆ 'Pink Surprise' — Has a vigorous, loose habit characteristic of wild Mountain-laurel; great for naturalistic landscapes. Flowers are deep pink in bud, lighter pink when open.

**Picea orientalis* (Oriental Spruce) — A spruce known for its dense, conical habit and small closely-pressed leaves. Considered one of the best and most adaptable spruces. (Zone 5)

\$12.00

Deciduous Shrubs & Trees

Rhododendron viscosum (Swamp Azalea) — Plants offered are hybrids of our fragrant native *Rhododendron viscosum*. Flowering is in early summer. They grow well in full sun or partial shade and in poorly drained to normal soils. Attractive fall color. (Zone 4) Each available:

2 gal. 12-15" \$21.00

- ◆ 'Lemon Drop' — Flower buds are peach opening to pastel yellow with a subtle lemon fragrance.
- ◆ 'Lollipop' — Pink flowers with a yellow throat, extremely fragrant.
- ◆ 'Weston's Innocence' — A heavy bloomer with small white blossoms. Vigorous, wide spreading plant.

Aronia arbutifolia 'Brilliantissima' (Red Chokeberry) — An under-used native shrub. Small white flowers produce shiny red berries in the fall; has brilliant red autumn foliage.

2 gal. 24-30" \$12.00

**Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird' (Summersweet) — Semi-dwarf; dark green foliage and white fragrant flowers in late summer. Likes some shade and moist soil. 3-4'

2 gal. 15-18" \$17.00

Clethra alnifolia 'Ruby Spice' — Deep pink flower buds open pink — the darkest pink available. 6-8'

1 gal. \$10.00

**Cornus sericea* 'Silver & Gold' — A shrub dogwood with brightly variegated leaves on yellow twigs. The colored twigs provide winter color. (Zone 3)

2 gal. 12-15" \$17.00

Hamamelis vernalis (Vernal Witch-hazel) — Fragrant light yellow flowers which open late February to early March; the earliest flowering shrub. Open growth; 10-12' high. Fall foliage is bright yellow. (Zone 4)

3 gal. 2-3' \$23.00

Hypericum prolificum (Shrubby St. Johnswort) — One of the hardiest hypericums. Has glossy-brown winter twigs and double-yellow flowers that bloom for a long period in the summer. (Zone 4)

2 gal. 15-18" \$17.00

**Acer griseum* (Paperbark Maple) — A small maple, to 30-40', considered by many to be one of the most beautiful small trees. Its reddish brown bark peels in fine strips, giving winter appeal. Fall foliage is scarlet. The Arboretum has a beautiful specimen with multiple trunks. (Zone 4)

1 gal. \$15.00

Chionanthus virginicus (Fringetree) — Small tree or large shrub, 12-20' tall and wide. Spreading, open habit. Has soft, feathery, fragrant flowers late May to early June. (Zone 4)

1 gal. \$13.00

Halesia carolina (Carolina Silverbell) — Grows to about 30'. Has delicate, white flowers in May which hang from the tree like bells. Grows well with rhododendrons. (Zone 5)

1 gal. \$13.00

**Cladrastis kentukea* (lutea) (American Yellow-wood) — A medium sized tree with pendulous clusters of fragrant white flowers in early summer and yellow fall color. (Zone 4)

1 gal. \$15.00

Quercus macrocarpa (Bur Oak, Mossycup Oak) — This hardy oak has been called a "suitable gift to the future." Growing 70-80' tall, it can live more than 150 years. The acorns are large and have deeply fringed cups; leaves are fiddle-shaped and turn purple-red in the fall. (Zone 3)

1 gal. \$15.00

Hardy Roses

These roses were developed in Canada, where they were bred for hardiness and disease resistance. These are roses that don't need pampering. All are hardy to Zone 3.

'Champlain' — A low-growing shrub rose with rich, velvety, deep red blossoms. Everblooming and free of disease.

2 gal. 12-18" \$17.00

'Henry Hudson' — A low-growing rugosa hybrid. Has copious, disease-free foliage and blooms continuously. Pink-tipped buds open to pure white, intensely fragrant blossoms.

2 gal. \$17.00

'Henry Kelsey' — A recent introduction from Agriculture Canada. Has long, arching canes which can be tied up to make a climber, or left to form a low, arching bush. The blossoms are semi-double with deep red petals and golden stamens. The best red climbing rose for cold climates. Moderately fragrant.

2 gal. 12-18" \$17.00

'Jens Munk' — A rugosa hybrid; a shrub approximately 5' x 5'. The semi-double blossoms are a clear, bright pink and have a fresh spicy fragrance. Blooms continuously.

2 gal. \$17.00

Deciduous Vines

Hydrangea anomala petiolaris (Climbing Hydrangea) — A beautiful, woody vine that attaches itself to vertical structures. Is effective grown up the trunk of a large tree, preferring the north side. Has beautiful white blossoms in June; insect and disease free.

1 gal., staked \$16.00

Ampelopsis brevipedunculata 'Elegans' (Variegated Porcelain Vine) — Has small white blossoms in early summer, followed by fall berries that are shiny bright blue. The leaves are deeply lobed and mottled with white and pink. To 10'.

1 gal. \$14.00

Clematis maximowicziana (paniculata) (Sweet Autumn Clematis) — Blooms in the fall with small clusters of fragrant white flowers which cover the vine.

\$8.00

Clematis lanuginosa 'Candida' — Large pure white flowers with yellow anthers. Considered by some to be the best large white clematis. Blooms in June, July, September.

\$9.00

Clematis viticella 'Betty Corning' — A plant much loved by our members. Blossoms are delicate lavender bells which appear for several weeks.

\$10.00

Complete order form on next page. Hurry!
Deadline for orders is Friday, February 23.



A Flowering, Ageless Tree -

John Abbuhl

John Abbuhl, arboretum board member, pediatrician and plantsman, has collected plants for 30 years and maintains a mini-arboretum on his 20 acres in Slingerlands.

Malus Rosaceae

Crab by some is much despised;
others think it wins the prize.
But time reveals for all to see
A shapely flowering age-less tree.

Both small and large and in between
and sometimes weeping, sometimes straight
and sometimes grand and very bold,
then, sometimes, with a deliberate mold.

Like gentle breezes carry sound
their fragrance wafts across the ground,
and fills our senses and our minds
with thoughts of peace and love sublime.

When our eyes behold their blooms
and see that rainbows are in tune
the heart is lifted far above
to see the glory that unfolds.

Then each will know within their soul
there is a crab for every part
of every garden of the heart.

J.W.A.

Rosaceae includes not only the most floriferous and ornamental blossoms but the most edible fruit. Roses, shadblows, Mespilus and cotoneasters, hawthorns, quinces, Medlars and crab apples, cherries, peaches, plums and Cherry-Laurel (*Prunus Laurocerasus*), pears, White-beam (*Sorbus Aria*) and Mountain-Ash all belong to Rosaceae. The crab apple is distinguished from the apple by being bred for its appearance, both flower form and leaf and twig, rather than for taste and hardiness.

We should not forget our noses, for it is fragrance that leads to the highest center of the brain. From the crabapple the kitchens of the Middle Ages obtained *verjuice*, a powerful vinegar both for salads and for preserving - and, of course, we all love crab apple jelly. For the fortunate few there is the pure pleasure of eating directly from the tree when there is a 'John Downie' or a 'Dolgo' crab around. The apple is the staple but it is the crabapple that enchances and embellishes the aesthetic qualities of life.

The origin of the crab apple is probably Kazakhstan in central Asia which gives us our "red blood." *Malus niedzwetzkyana* from Kazakhstan has the red pigment that shows in leaves, fruit and flowers; its genes are in our reddest hybrids. But we find native crabs in all of the Northern Hemisphere continents.

There are more than 800 hybrid cultivars of the crab apple. They range in size from 6 to 8 feet up to 40 feet. Some are narrow, some broad, and some weeping. Some are delicate and twiggy, some strong and bold. Some have an appealing vase shape, all require well drained soil and a good amount of sun. Some crabs have fruit which is of ornamental quality persisting after the leaves fall. Some have oval leaves, some lobed and some serrated or toothed while others are plain. Some have good fall color. The flowers range from white through pink and red to rose and purple. Some are single petals while others are double. Some produce fruit, some do not. Some fruit is large, 1-2.5 inches in diameter and some fruit is pea- or cherry-sized. Fruit varies in color from brown-green to yellow and red with combinations of color on the same tree. Some are edible and others are decidedly

forgettable. The fragrance varies and the cold hardiness varies. But the crab family is generally the hardiest of our ornamental flowering trees.

There is no other flowering tree that, in aggregate, gives you such a long flowering period with such a wide spectrum of color and form. The Asiatic and European crab species and hybrids flower up to three weeks earlier than the American crabs. The judicious selection of varieties can, with five or six trees, provide white, pink, purple and rose red blooms over a period of five weeks. And when autumn comes these may provide a perfusion of highly colored fruit. Even the leaves of some crabs provide fall color as well as summer interest.

The average crab takes eight to twelve days to go from first bud to last petal, but the Bechtel may continue for two weeks because all its buds do not open at the same time. Other crabs such as 'Kola' share this quality. The expected time of flowering will depend on seasonal weather as well as soil conditions and sunlight.

A list of relative flowering times is available to help with your selection. See *Ornamental Crab Apples* by Arie F. denBoer. Other considerations in the selection of crab apple plantings are color and size of blooms, size and shape of tree, fragrance, foliage shape and color, and fall color as well as disease resistance. Additional references are: *The International Book of Trees* by Hugh Johnson, 1973, Simon and Schuster; *The National Arboretum Book of Outstanding Garden Plants* by Jacqueline Hereteau, Stonesong Press, Simon and Schuster, 1990.

The George Landis Arboretum has 43 listed specimens. There is an original crab apple area as you approach the northwest corner leading to the memorial rock honoring the founder Fred Lape. Fred was an "apple man" and wrote monographs on the subject. We are now in the process of creating a whole new crab apple area along the west hillside at the entryway parking lot. This will, when completed, provide the traveler over the county road from Esperance to the arboretum with a gentle uplifting of the heart that means a journey well spent.

I hope when you have seen the crab - smelled and tasted too - and that you will want to come each spring to repeat that special view. - John Abbuhl

Beginnings

Our plant collections are set amid the landscape of a nineteenth century farm. The weathered barn, walls, farmhouse and ponds are reminders of the time when this land sustained people and their animals. The land was first deeded in 1769. The present farmhouse and barn were built about 1840. The place became known as Oak Nose Farm after the immense white oak, which, although now reduced in size by storms and great age, is the arboretum's symbol.

In 1903 the Lape family - mother, father and one child - moved to the farm. This child was Fred Lape, who was to become the arboretum's founder. Boyhood on the farm formed Fred's character and supplied memory and sentiment much in evidence in the poetry he later wrote, but as a young and educated man he left the farm and visited the world, teaching literature for a time at Stanford. He returned home to the farm in 1928, and while farming, writing and teaching to make ends meet, he developed his interests in painting, poetry, music and horticulture. His farm became a mecca for artists.

The arboretum was formally established in 1951 as a memorial to Fred's close friend George E. Landis. With friends and fellow gardeners sharing the work, but largely with his own passion and energy, Fred set out the main planting of the arboretum in 1951. Since then, with volunteers serving as laborers and trustees, the arboretum collections have grown each year. After Fred Lape died in Mexico in 1985, the volunteer tradition continued, and with the support of members and the generosity of donors such as the late Elizabeth Corning, a small staff has been maintained.

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