## Spring 2011

Vol. 29 No. 2

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UPDATE LANDIS LIVE ON WAMC

Tune in as Fred Breglia, Landis' Director of Horticulture and Operations, answers your questions about all things horticultural on WAMC's "Vox Pop." All broadcasts begin at 2 p.m. on the following Fridays:

> May 6 August 5 June 3 September 2 July 1 October 7

# LANDIS ARBORETUM NEWSLETTE

he Spring Plant Sale, the Arboretum's most important fund raising venture of the year, will be held on Saturday, May 14, and Sunday, May 15. The sale will open to the general public both days from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The traditional Pick of the Pots Party will be held for Arboretum members only on Friday, May 13, from 5 to 8 p.m. Light refreshments will be served, and participants will have the privilege of choosing plants before the sale opens to the public.

John Sanchirico, Arboretum Director, and I recently found some time to talk about this year's sale.

*Cindy:* This will be your first plant sale at the Arboretum since you became director. What will you be looking for in this event?

*John:* I have been to Arboretum plant sales in the past as a customer looking at the plants and always thought it was just the perfect event to ring in the spring gardening season. As director, my first concern is to see that all aspects of the sale run as smoothly as possible, and

that all attendees are happy with the purchases they have made. It is an event that requires tremendous participation and coordination on the part of our many and superb volunteers. This first plant sale will be very much a learning experience for me.

*Cindy:* Will this sale follow the format and procedures of past sales?

*John:* Yes, of course! The plant sales are a longstanding Arboretum tradition, and our dedicated volunteers and staff have worked hard over the years at fine





tuning . . . all aspects of the event. This year's effort, I am sure, will be yet another step forward . . . The Arboretum will showcase certain types of plants, the Propa-gation Committee will present selections they have raised for the sale, and consignors will offer a huge variety of trees, shrubs, and perennials. The ever-popular book sale and the outstanding sale of homemade baked goods will also take place during the plant sale. *Cindy:* What plants will the Arboretum showcase this year?

John: The three plant groups that will be featured at this year's plant sale are trilliums, blueberries, and Japanese maples. Five varieties of trilliums will be offered ... [two species] are native to our area woods. The others are native to the Midwest and Tennessee but will grow well in shaded northeast gardens. Blueberries not only offer outstanding eating; they also provide an excellent shrub for garden design. ... While [blueberries are] self-fruitful, it is advisable to plant at least two varieties of blue

berries for optimum fruit production. By planting early-, mid-, and late-season blueberries, it is possible to have fresh blueberries from June until September! Japanese maples offer the possibility of superb understory plantings. Their many leaf and branch shapes create outstanding textural design in the garden landscape. Given a sheltered and shaded site, they can become the focal point of the garden ..... *Cindy:* Wow! That is quite a list! The Propagation

Committee has quite a list also. This year, the com*continued on page 2.* 

## Garden Party at Landis Arboretum Saturday, June 18, 4:30–8:30 p.m.

n June 18, celebrate the summer solstice at Landis.

Bring your friends and enjoy the pleasures of the season. Dinner at twilight, live music, and a silent auction. We promise you a most memorable evening, which will benefit the Arboretum too.

Join us under the Great Tent, stroll through the

VanLoveland Perennial Gardens, and gaze at the early evening sky and the rolling hills of the Schoharie Valley. Twilight dinner by the Sweet Tooth Caterers, and cash bar by the Hillview Tavern. Music by Spiral Tango.

Tickets are available at a special rate of \$40 per person, prepaid. After June



10, the price will be \$45. Tables of 8 are also available on request.

To purchase tickets by phone or for further information, call the Arboretum at (518) 875-6935, or go online: tickets can be reserved through PayPal at www.landisarboretum.org.

o donate items for the silent auction, please contact the Arboretum.

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The Arboretum is located one and one-half miles north of Route 20 in Esperance. Follow the signs from the village to Lape Road. The Arboretum is one-quarter mile straight ahead. Visit our website for more information and directions.

# Arboretum Plant Sale: A Primer

- Volunteers from Arboretum-sponsored Boy Scout Troop 501 will be available to help those needing assistance in getting purchases to their vehicles.
- Starting times and dates for the sale are firm. Purchases may not be made prior to the sale. The Arboretum cannot set aside plants prior to the sale.
- Arboretum plant experts will be available all weekend to answer your questions and to provide suggestions and advice on plant selection, site requirements, and proper planting and care techniques.
- Free soil pH tests will be provided on Saturday by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie Master Gardeners: bring one cup of dry soil in a clean plastic bag.
- Please park cars in our upper parking area next to the Meeting House.
- Handicapped parking and drop-off space is available. Please inform the parking attendants of your needs.
- Sorry—dogs are not permitted at the Plant Sale.
- **Restrooms and picnic tables** are available for your convenience.
- Have your membership card handy for quicker checkout. (10% discount for members.)
- All purchased items must be removed by 4 p.m. Sunday. Landis does not make deliveries and is not responsible for items left after 4 p.m.
- Call the Arboretum at 518-875-6935. Email us at: director@landisarboretum.org; info@landisarboretum.org.

Check our website: www.landisarboretum.org.

- Some of the native plants on their list include red chokeberry, black gum trees, *Nyssa sylvatica*; American hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana*; buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*; and American witchhazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*. There will be a variety of willows, including French pussywillow, *Salix caprea*, and the banker's willow, *Salix cottetii*, which grows only six feet tall. There will be a group of edible herbs and some . . . heirloom flowers and vegetables.
- *Cindy:* Members also receive a 10% discount on their plants. The discount is available for those who renew a membership and for those who take out a new membership.
- *John:* That's right! So please take advantage, and don't forget to invite all your friends!



*Note:* John Sanchirico came to the Arboretum in October of 2010. Cindy King has been the Volunteer Propagator at the Arboretum since 2008.

# Your Landis Membership Away from Home

id you know that your Landis membership entitles you to free admission and additional benefits at botanical gardens, arboreta, and conservatories throughout North America?

The American Horticultural Society encourages participating gardens members to travel the country discovering the diversity and beauty of horticulture across America. Through the AHS Reciprocal Admissions Program, members receive special admission privileges in addition to discounts on gift shop purchases and special events at participating gardens. Simply present your current membership card at the admission counter or gift shop of the garden you are visiting to receive the benefits. Each card will only admit the individual(s) whose name is listed on the card. In the case of family memberships, gardens may limit admission to two people. Some

gardens may require you to show a photo ID.

Please note the 90-mile local exclusion policy. If you are a member of a participating garden, other gardens within 90 miles are not required to extend the benefits.

Be sure to check the AHS website (www.ahs.org) for an up-to-date list of participating gardens.



# **Collections News** New and Underutilized Trees for the Landscape: from Acer to Cercis Part 1 of a 3-Part Series \_\_\_\_\_\_

If you have been thinking about some new trees for planting in your yard lately,

nja Photo

the vast array of choices has no doubt been overwhelming. Your local garden center or Landscaper supplier will offer you more varieties of cultivars to choose from than ever  $p_{H}$  eties of before.

So what is a cultivar? A cultivar is an abbreviation for "cultivated variety." Special characteristics may include a different flower, leaf color, or height, but not enough difference to qualify as a distinct species. Cultivars are produced in nurseries by taking cuttings instead of seeds, since propagation with seeds would not ensure the desired characteristics of the cultivar.

Not all cultivars are created equal. Different doesn't always mean better. A good example of a good cultivar gone bad is the Bradford pear, Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford.' When this tree first hit the market, it seemed like the perfect urban ornamental flowering tree. It grew in a variety of tough sites, flowered nicely, had a dark green glossy leaf and a nice fall color. Because of these characteristics it was widely planted. The problem with this cultivar is that just when it reached a mature height, it would literally break apart with the slightest snow, ice, or wind. The reason is poor branch architecture. [The branches grow out from the trunk in very tight angles and commonly have included bark between the trunk and the

branches which are actually failure points.] A much better choice is the Autumn Blaze pear, Pyrus calleryana 'Autumn Blaze'. This tree has many of the same characteristics such as the ability to grow in tough sites, great flowers and glossy green foliage, and it almost never fails due to branch breakage.

The main characteristics growers are focusing on include Flower Power, Great Fall Color and Good Leaf Color during Growing Season, Interesting Bark, Adaptability, Strong Branch Architecture, No Significant Pest or Diseases, and Hardiness to Zone in our area.

To be a truly great cultivar a tree must have all or most of the above characteristics. The following are some of my favorite new and underutilized trees on the market today. They are all adaptable to a variety of tough sites, have relatively no pests or diseases, and are hardy to at least Zone 5.

State Street® Maple (Acer miyabei 'Morton') is a new selection introduced by the Morton Arboretum. This tree has excellent branching character, a uniform broad-pyramidal habit, superior heat/drought tolerance, clean foliage and good yellow fall color.

The underutilized three-flower maple, Acer triflorum, boasts very attractive light brown and tan exfoliating bark, great structure, and an awesome reddish orange fall color.

A great new river birch cultivar, Dura Heat River Birch (Betula nigra 'Dura Heat'), is a good choice for tough sites. It has attractive

brown peeling bark and is resistant to diseases and insects, including the bronze birch borer.

The bronze birch borer is a major pest for the beautiful white paper birches that are native to New York. A great alternative white barked birch is the Asian white birch, Betula platyphylla 'VerDale'. It looks very similar to our native white birches but is resistant to bronze birch borer.

A new cultivar of the Katsura Tree, called Red Fox Katsura (Cercidiphyllum japonicum 'Rotfochs'), is now available. This tree has dark red leaves from spring through fall, is cold hardy, reaches a mature size of 35' feet tall by 35' feet wide and has a great pyramidal shape through middle age that becomes more spreading when mature.

If you prefer a weeping Katsura, try the new Amazing Grace Katsura, which has a very elegant graceful weeping habit and turns a brilliant yellow in the fall.

Hearts of Gold Eastern Redbud (Cercis canadensis 'Hearts of Gold') is similar to the regular Eastern redbud in many ways except the color of the new foliage. All of the new growth is yellow and looks like hearts, hence the name. This yellow new growth remains yellow throughout the year. This cultivar is truly a great landscape specimen and cold hardy too. It will reach a height of 25' and a spread of 30'. It has a lovely rosey pink flower in the spring and in the fall the whole tree will turn yellow!

## **April and May**

The Big Dipper, part of the constellation Ursa Major, the Great Bear, high in the north in the early evening.

## May

Saturn toward the south as darkness falls. May 8-22

Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, and Mars in the morning sky. Look about 30 minutes before sunrise and use binoculars to see faint Mars and Mercury.

## July 7

The Moon, approaching first quarter, passes below Saturn.

## August and September

The summer Milky Way arches high across the sky in the dark hours before midnight. Best when the evening skies are free of moonlight (August 21–30, September 20–29).



oin the Albany Area Amateur Astronomers for star gazing under the dark Arboretum skies. A variety of telescopes will treat you to views of nebulae, star clusters, galaxies, planets, and other celestial phenomena.

Check the Public Star Party on the 2011 Calendar of Events or on-line at www. landisarboretum.org.

Free admission and parkingbut donations to the Arboretum are always welcome.

## August 12 and 13

Perseid meteor shower, but light from a full moon will greatly hamper the show October 12 and 13

Full moon near Jupiter in the eastern evening sky on the 12th. Smallest full moon of 2011. Nearly full moon near Jupiter in the eastern evening sky on the 13th.

## November 26

Crescent moon and Venus, a beautiful sight in the southwestern sky just after sunset. December 13 and 14

Geminid meteor shower, but light from a waning gibbous moon will interfere. December 26

Crescent moon and Venus, a beautiful sight in the southwestern sky just after sunset. Not as close together as in November.

# Stopping Time: Collecting Seeds of Spring Perennials

Spring passes so quickly. Those wonderful spring ephemeral flowers—bloodroot, trilliums, anemones, toothwort, marsh marigolds, etc.—often bloom for just a few days or, at most, a couple of weeks. We look forward to seeing these elusive woodland treasures for most of the year, but the time given us for actually enjoying them is short.

But, wait! Flowers precede seeds in the plant kingdom, and spring ephemerals set seed just like other plants. Seeds of early spring bloomers take about 4 to 6 weeks to form and ripen. By frequent and careful watching of a plant as it sets seeds, you can determine when to harvest the seeds since they usually turn color as they ripen. Gather them, remove from the pods, wash away fruity coatings and store them dry in clean envelopes marked with the date and name of the plant.



Seeds are amazing entities. Each species of seed comes with its own inherent "code." The code prescribes the conditions necessary for that particular seed to germinate. If you don't give the seed exactly the prescribed conditions, the seed won't germinate.

There are many books written about propagating woodland plants from seed. One of the best is William Cullina's *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and*  *Canada* (published in 2000 by the New England Wildflower Society and available from the society's website: www.newfs.org). This book describes the needs of individual wildflower seeds in great detail, unraveling the mystery of seed "codes" so that anyone can successfully raise wildflowers from seed. If you try just one or two types of wildflower seed a year, the workload is minimal, and the rewards can be great.

If you don't have wildflowers of your own to propagate, ask friends if you could collect from flowers they have growing on their properties. Always secure landowner permission. Remember that it is illegal to collect seed from public parks and State lands. Take only half the seeds and spread the rest around the area where you find the parent plants so that the plants may increase in their native habitat as well as in your own garden.

# Landis portraits: Anne Frey A series about the people behind the plants at the Arboretum



There is a distinction in the bee world between "bee havers," and "bee keepers" Bee havers are those who just have hives to get some honey, but don't understand bees and aren't concerned about the colony's health Beekeepers are those who strive to learn and work with the bees to increase their keeping skills. Anne Frey keeps bees.

Anne remembered her first few years as a beekeeper, when she moved from Albany to rural Duanesburg. Bees entered the picture when a neighbor wanted a bulk-buying discount on hive supplies. His interest soon waned, but Anne was hooked Anne's source of information at first was a beekeeping catalog. Only her innate curiosity and stubborn nature kept her going until she discovered an old book on beekeeping. Among its pages she found a list of beekeeping clubs, leading her to the Southern Adirondack Beekeepers Association (SABA). She was initially hesitant when she saw only white haired gentlemen "of a certain age" but joined anyway and eventually served as president of SABA.

She is not sentimental or "new age-y" about bees, seeing them as "wonderful but not magical," and is clear about the limitations of place and person that could doom a potential beekeeper. Location needs include a good water source, abundant trees and plantings, and neighbors not big on chemical lawn treatments. Personal traits include physical strength as hive boxes and full combs are heavy, so a strong back and arms (or access to someone with them) is important.

Francois Huber was a blind 18th Century beekeeper who, with the support of sighted colleagues, added critical information about the role of the queen bee. To Anne, Huber's story highlights the most important characteristic of any beekeeper: habit of mind. A successful beekeeper is one who works without preconceptions and is able to watch and

## —Wilma Jozwiak

learn. Bees don't care that a human may have a "better" way to do things if that way violates instinct validated by eons of existence.

Anne is the perfect embodiment of this inquiring habit of mind. She has become proficient in rearing queen bees, learned to make creamed honey, and uses a hive management strategy that replaces chemicals with physical strategies. To her, any hive problem is an opportunity to observe and learn to become a better keeper.

Since successful beekeeping is not easy, why would one want to take it up? In Anne's case, she credits her involvement in beekeeping with personal growth. Mastering the difficult aspects of bees and their culture has given her confidence in other fields as well. When faced with a challenge, she remembers "I am a beekeeper—I can do anything!" Originally rather shy, Anne has become an outspoken advocate who speaks confidently with groups and individuals.

If you are interested in bees, beekeeping, or any of the products of local hives, Anne invites you to visit the SABA website at ww.adirondackbees.org and to keep your eyes open for her next beekeeping class at Landis Arboretum. (Saturday, November 12, 12:30–4:30 p.m.)

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