



The Newsletter LANDIS ARBORETUM

Esperance, New York

Summer 1999

Volume 18, No. 3

Upcoming Events

- August 14 Concert: Sun Mountain Fiddler.
7 p.m
- 17 Star Party, Annual Meeting:
Astronomers. 7:30 pm
- 18 Arb. Adventures, Nature
Art. 10 am
- 22 Family Workshop, Tree
Identification. 2 pm
- Sept. 11-12 **FALL PLANT SALE**
10-4 both days
- 12 Family Workshop: Mammal
Tracks and Traces. 2 pm
- 25 Family Workshop: Map and
Compass. 2 pm
- October 2 Free Arboretum Tour: Evergreens
and Trees With Winter
Interest. 11 am
- 3 Family Workshop: Fall Foliage
Walk. 2 pm
- 15-16 Star Parties, Astronomers.
7:30 pm both nights
- 23 Family Workshop: Bird Feeders.
2 pm
- 23 **VOLUNTEER WORKDAY.** 9-4
- Dec. 10-11 Star Parties, Astronomers.
7:30 pm both nights

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The Fall Plant Sale

- Herm Finkbeiner

**September 11 and 12, 1999
Saturday and Sunday 10-4**

Although on a smaller scale than our spring sale, the fall plant sale will have a large variety of perennials, ornamental grasses, and deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, including dwarf conifers.

PARKING

If you attended the spring sale, you were probably pleased at how smoothly the parking was managed! Please be assured that volunteers that kept the traffic flowing smoothly in the spring will also be in place for the fall sale. **There will be no traffic jam at the fall sale!**

And, I'm sure you noted that carts and wagons (and Scouts!) were on hand to help you carry your plants at the spring sale. This will be true at the fall sale also, but it would be **very helpful** if you could bring your own cart or "little red wagon" if you anticipate purchasing numerous and/or larger items.

PLANT DONATIONS

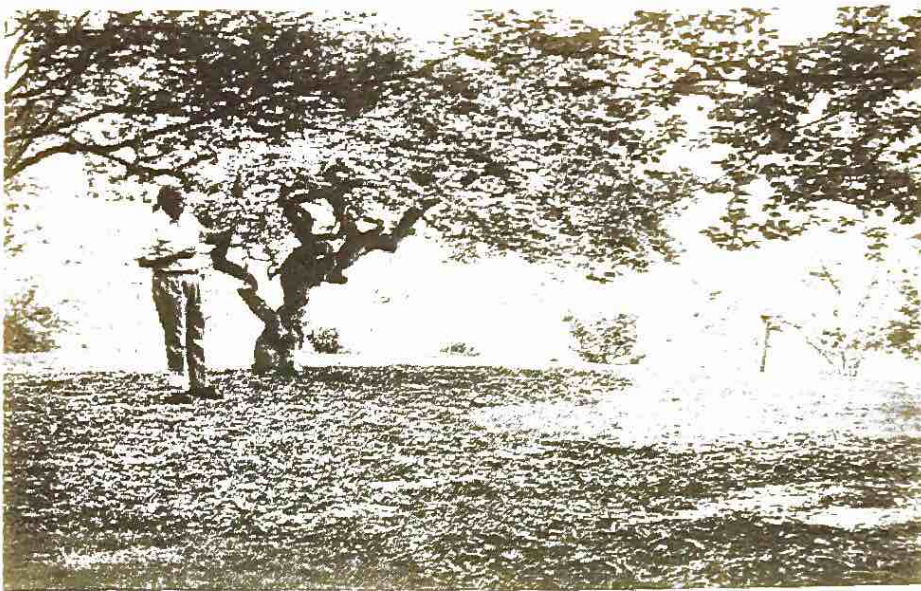
The success of last fall's sale was due in part to generous donations of plants by our own members. As you divide perennials this summer, consider the fall sale as a destination for unwanted divisions. In order to have plants in standard containers, we can supply pots for your use. Just call the office for information.

A Variety of Plants Available at Fall Sale

- Viktoria Serafin

We are working on putting together another great group of plants! Those of you who have attended prior sales know that we focus on plants that offer late-season bloom, as well as on other plants with late-season appeal, such as ornamental grasses. One perennial that offers all-season interest is *Polemonium* 'Brise d'Anjou', which we finally have been able to obtain; its white-edged foliage is so pretty it doesn't even need to bloom but it does, with the typical blue Jacob's ladder flowers. We will have a limited number of hardy, own-root roses, including Griffith Buck roses 'Hawkeye Belle', 'Applejack' and 'Countryman'.

(Continued on page 3)



A walk around the arboretum shows extensive mulching in the beech collection. Herm Finkbeiner, board member, is shown here under the parasol beech, *Fagus sylvatica* 'Tortuosa'.

From the Garden

Does your psyche need a lift? Bring a snack or a picnic lunch, enjoy the magnificent views of the Schoharie Valley, and stroll the arboretum. See what the staff and volunteers have been doing at your arboretum!

Members of the Cobleskill-Richmondville High School Honor Society have constructed a dozen or so new signs to replace badly-weathered interpretive signs along the Woodland Trail and in the Van Loveland Gardens. Students **Jennifer Cash, Kim Katonica, Joe Sandor** and advisors **Mary Colvard** and **Sue McConnell** initially proposed the project to the Landis Board of Trustees, and with their encouragement constructed signs designed to withstand weather and critters. The captions are first laminated and then sealed between two sheets of Plexiglas that are, in turn, bolted to wooden stands. (See photo, p. 6.) **Gil O'Brien**, building and grounds committee member and volunteer, installed the new signs for this ongoing project.

A 1998 Department of Environmental Conservation grant will enable the Arboretum to purchase and install quality photo-metallic labeling for much of the arboretum's Notable Tree collection. A 1999 grant from the DEC Urban and Community Forestry Fund will allow the addition of trees to the arboretum, particularly varieties to complete our collection of those trees recommended by Cornell University for urban/street use.

The clearing of grass and addition of woodchip mulch rings around many trees is bringing many positive comments from members and repeat visitors. The beginnings were small with woodchip mulch (provided by Niagara Mohawk) in small rings around many shrubs and trees. This summer, the number of mulched varieties has been increased greatly and some trees are now mulched to their driplines which reduces moisture loss and facilitates mowing. (See photo above.) If you haven't visited the signature Great Oak, now is the time to enjoy the view and admire the tidy, newly-mulched area. This ongoing project is carried out by **Fred Breglia**, horticulturist, and his crew of young men from the Schoharie County Private Industry Council who work five days a week at the Arboretum from the beginning of July to the end of August.



THE 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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Fran Finkbeiner

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Twenty-three fledgling bluebirds have been seen in and around the bluebird boxes that were built, donated and installed this spring by Dan Palemiere of Fultonville. (The last issue of the newsletter carried an article about the boxes, but the photo of Dan was notably absent...an editorial error. My apologies!- Ed.)

A Variety of Plants at Fall Sale (from page 1)

Our supplier of wonderfully well-grown dwarf conifers will be represented, as will the grower of rare plants who provided very limited numbers of treasures for the last two sales. We will again have a good selection of hostas, including some very new and wonderful selections. Other choices will include deciduous ornamental trees, shrubs, flowering and foliage plants for the shady garden, ground covers and many other perennials.

The plants are container-grown and ready to go in your garden, with plenty of time to become well-established before the end of the growing season.

Available at the sale will be *colchicums* and autumn flowering crocus. Unusual spring flowering bulbs will be offered also. Orders for these bulbs will be taken and they will be available for pick-up closer to planting time. For the convenience of those who can't attend the sale, an order form is included in this newsletter.

Please join us and let our knowledgeable volunteers help you select the right plants for your garden.

Horticulture Certificate: A Cooperative Program

- Claudia McLaughlin
Education Committee

Beginning next year, a joint venture of the Landis Arboretum and SUNY Cobleskill will offer adult courses leading to a Horticulture Certificate. The subject areas to be included in this non-credit program are *Soils, Landscape Design, Introduction to Botany, Herbaceous Plants, Design and Cultivation of the Herbaceous Border, Identification of Woody Trees and Shrubs, Health Care of Woody Plants and Shrubs, and Plant Propagation*. Each subject area will be covered through four weekly two-hour classes, to be taught either at the arboretum or at SUNY Cobleskill, depending on the facilities and equipment required. Participants must complete four of the courses successfully to receive the Certificate.

The program is being designed jointly by members of the Arboretum Education Committee and the faculty of SUNY Cobleskill. A brochure including course descriptions, fees and registration procedures will be ready this fall.

Arboretum Receives Heritage Hero Award

On June 3 the Landis Arboretum received a Heritage Heroes Award, presented by the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission. This first annual award is in recognition of those people and organizations from the Mohawk Valley who have made significant contributions to the preservation, understanding and celebration of the area's unique history and culture. The Heritage Heroes are a mix of individuals and civic, business and non-profit organizations who are dedicated to preserving, teaching, promoting and developing the area's natural, cultural and historic strengths.

Landis, representing Schoharie County, was awarded the honor for the arboretum's comprehensive program in natural history education. Awards were given to representatives from each of the eight counties in the Mohawk Valley Corridor. Nick Zabawsky, Landis Board of Trustees President; Carol Wock, Board Past President, and Board Secretary Susan Sagendorf and John Sagendorf were on hand at Arkell Hall Gardens in Canajoharie for the presentation by Carle J. Kopecky, Director of the Old Stone Fort and Mohawk Valley Heritage Commissioner.


We who are part of the Landis Arboretum are proud to be recognized and honored by the commission.

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FALL WORK DAY
Saturday, October 23, 9-4
Lunch will be served;
snacks, coffee &
drinks served all day.
Fred Breglia will be in charge; he needs
lots of helpers for this pre-Winter
cleanup! Call the arboretum
now for information and to sign up.
518-875-6394

Spring Plant Sale Report

- Herm Finkbeiner

Once more the massive efforts of dedicated volunteers resulted in a very successful plant sale which provided customers with the interesting plants they had sought and the Arboretum with a large part of its operating income.

When the books were closed on the Spring Plant Sale in 1996 the sale had earned \$4,600. In 1997 we realized a record \$14,211 from the event. In 1998, the sale provided \$17,922, an increase of almost \$4,000 over the year before. And 1999 was even better!! The sale earned \$19,953.

The amazing increase in income is due to the concentrated effort of almost 100 people. We won't try to name all of you - we may inadvertently leave out someone. **We are grateful to all of our hardworking volunteers. The arboretum simply could not operate without your help. We do thank you!**

For an operation of this magnitude to take place, work has to begin far in advance. By August **Carol Wock** and **Victoria Serafin** were immersed in wish lists, books, and supplier catalogs, doing one of the largest jobs - ordering the many unusual plants that the sale depends on for its reputation as a place to find the out-of-the-ordinary and sometimes rare.

By autumn all 15 of the committee heads had begun to meet and plan every part of the sale from budget to food. Each year, the Acorn Shop, this year under the direction of **Barbara Hunt**, contributes more

to the drawing power of the sale. A raffle gave attendees a chance to win prizes chosen enhance to their own gardens and, at the same time, to help the Arboretum. As in 1998, **Nancy Boericke** managed the raffle. Of course, the principal moneymaker is the sale of plants with co-chairs **Carol Wock** and **Viktoria Serafin** very ably assisted by **John Manion**, **Paul Schneider**, **Nick Zabawsky**, **Florence Grimm** and many more.

Publicity, which helps bring customers to the sale, was handled by **Fran Finkbeiner**. **Anne Jaster**, directed laying out the sale area. **Shelley Weed** made sure there were cashiers and the necessary equipment. **Merv Prichard** made sure everyone who needed box to carry purchases found one. One feature that greatly improved the flow at the checkout was the organized method for writing sales slips. For that we thank **Carolyn Edwards**. And we appreciate the young people in **Schoharie Scout Troop #42** and their leaders **Larry Weaver** and **Nadine Harrison** who were on hand to help customers carry their purchases to the parking lot.

The Pick of the Pots Preview Party has become of particular interest to arboretum members. Now in its third year, the preview party was even more enthusiastically received. Under the direction of **Cindy Weyl** a number of changes were made; most importantly, the food was catered greatly reducing the number of volunteers needed. Many, many plants were sold during the evening.

One feature of the sale that enhances the arboretum's viability is the membership booth. **Susan Sagendorf** and her team enrolled about 80 new members. **Members provide a good measure of the financial support, much of the visibility, and a great deal of the work that makes the arboretum possible.**

And, where do all the plant sale workers come from? **Florence Grimm** spent many hours calling members to ask for help, matching their available times and interests with the tasks that needed doing, and scheduling everyone. If you can help next year even for an hour or two, please call the Arboretum (518-875-6935) and put your name on Florence's list.

PARKING

Special recognition is due the people who solved the parking problem at the spring sale. Those who were there for the 1998 sale remember that Saturday morning could only be described as chaos. This year there were no traffic jams, no one had to wait to find a parking space or be delayed in leaving when they had finished shopping. Traffic was handled so smoothly that many of Saturday morning's volunteers thought attendance was less this year because there was none of last year's congestion.

But it wasn't true! Saturday's sales were slightly more than in 1998. All of the credit for that change goes to **Fred Breglia**, the Arboretum horticulturist, his crew of parking lot monitors, and to the **Schoharie County Sheriff's Department Tact Force**.

Landis is proud of each of our volunteers and we thank you for your participation.



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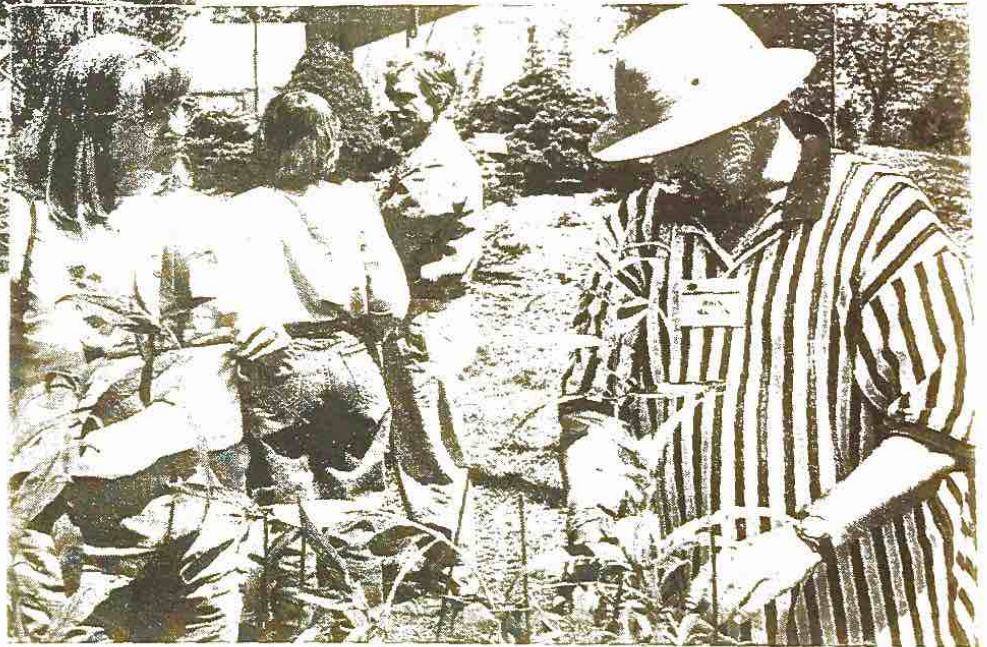
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Out and About....



Above: Fred Breglia shows off a replacement interpretive sign made by the Cobleskill-Richmondville High School Honor Society.

Above right: Nancy Boericke presents raffle winner Rick Ohlerking with the sun dial.

Above: Plantsman and supersalesman John Manion provides assistance for Spring Plant Sale customers. Nick Zabawsky, another salesman of great knowledge and skill, can be seen in the center back.



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Wish List

- Florence Grimm
Building and Grounds

The Landis Arboretum is growing, expanding, and with that comes the need for larger and upgraded equipment of professional quality. Existing equipment continues to be stretched, literally, to the breaking point, limiting our ability to maintain the arboretum.

- One wish is for friends to support us through donations to purchase a John Deere tractor 790 or machine of equal quality, 4-wheel drive, 30 HP with backhoe and loader, approximate cost \$20,000. Planting trees, moving mulch, maintaining a compost pile and many more chores would be more efficiently done than with the methods used presently. The receipt of a DEC grant to expand the arboretum's collection and to include Cornell's list of trees suitable for urban planting makes essential the use of a tractor of this size.
- Another wish is for donations toward the purchase of professional hand and power tools for landscaping.
- Still another is for CB walkie talkies with vibralert to enable communication between the operational manager/horticulturist working on the grounds and the arboretum office both for efficiency and safety.
- Lone volunteers working in the Acorn Shop would appreciate a cassette player to keep them company.
- And, volunteers are always needed to assist Fred Breglia in caring for the trees, shrubs and gardens.

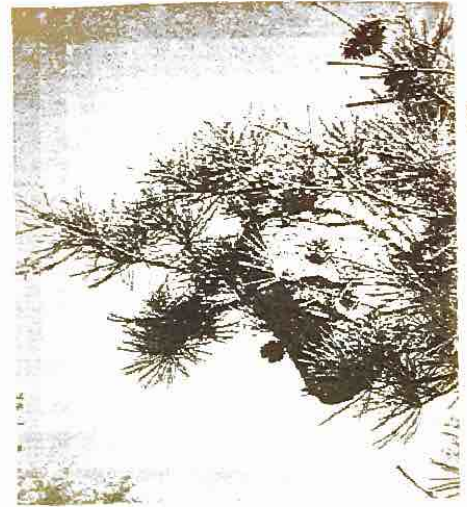
Stethorus Punctillum, The Gardener's Friend

- Fred Breglia, Horticulturist

When I started working at Landis I began implementing an integrated pest management policy (IPM) to deal with pests and diseases in our collection. IPM can both save us money and reduce the amount of chemicals that we use. IPM is a practice of monitoring crops, taking preventative measures, assessing damage, and choosing the most appropriate action. There are many different strategies, including good cultural practices, biological controls, planting resistant varieties, and chemical controls.

Using beneficial insects to attack pests is often a good idea. In nature, beneficial insects will often keep pest populations at bay, and it makes sense for us at the arboretum to make use of as many of the beneficial insects as we can. Recently I released a population of *Stethorus punctillum*, a beetle that feeds heavily on spider mites. There are many predators of spider mites, but many will feed on only one kind; *stethorus* is indiscriminate and feeds on all spider mites. As a matter of fact, *stethorus* is often referred to as "the spider mite destroyer," and Landis will soon have a healthy population of this fast-reproducing beetle. We deposited beetles on various collections throughout the arboretum where spider mites are a problem. When the mites in one area are all eaten, the beetle will move to other areas with mite populations.

An example of how well IPM works was found while regularly scouting the collection. I noticed a bronzing/silvering of lilac foliage on some specimen plants. A close look with a hand lens revealed both mature



The home of less-than-friendly occupants of the area near the beech collection.

and immature privet thrips. On many of the same plants, I noted lilac borer holes. I made a cut into the stems to see if any actual insects could be found, and found that some of the borers were being attacked by ants, one of their worst predators. If I had chosen to use a chemical pesticide to control the privet thrips, I would also have killed the ants but not the lilac borer because they feed on the pith in the middle of the stem and would go untouched by the pesticide. Rather, to control the situation, I sprayed the privet thrips with an insecticidal soap which cut the population down to almost nothing – and the ants were left alive to control the lilac borers.

People often find pests and immediately spray an insecticide to control the problem without looking at all the factors involved – and, in turn, make the problem even worse. Many homeowners, along with professionals, don't use the IPM approach in dealing with pests. If you don't, you may be wasting both money and our environment.



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Naturally Decaffeinated ...the Kentucky Coffee Tree

- Fred Breglia, Arboretum Horticulturist

This is another in the on-going series describing species included on the list of notable Trees at the Landis Arboretum.

The Kentucky coffee tree, *Gymnocladus dioica*, is an interesting tree that can make a great specimen for both parks and residences. It is also on Cornell's Urban Tree list as suitable for street tree planting. *Gymnocladus* likes a rich, moist soil but it is adaptable to a wide range of soils and conditions including drought and city locations. It prefers full sun, but will tolerate partial shade. There are very few pests or diseases that seriously threaten the tree, and it is hardy from Zone 2 through 8. It has only one close cousin, *G. chinense*, the Chinese soap tree, with seeds that have a soap-like quality.

The Kentucky coffee tree is native to the United States from New York and Pennsylvania to Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee where it grows naturally in bottomlands and on moist slopes.

Leaves of the Kentucky coffee tree are bi-pinnately (twice) compound and two to three feet long, giving the foliage a fluffy appearance. The branches are stout-looking but rather brittle, somewhat contorted and brown in color. The small buds are partially sunken and surrounded by a ring of bark that forms a little round rim around each bud. (See the drawing at the right.) The bark is furrowed and forms scaly ridges, especially attractive in winter when the tree's upright, contorted and open habit is especially striking against a winter sky.

Gymnocladus can grow to 60 or 75 feet in height by 40 feet in width, and has a slow to medium growth rate. In a ten year period of time, it may grow 12 feet, averaging a little more than a foot a year.

The tree is dioecious, that is, its male and female flowers appear on separate trees in late May or early June. The off-white flowers are three-quarter to one inch long, slightly hairy, and borne on large one-foot panicles. The fruits form in five- to ten-inch long by one to one-and-a-half inch wide brownish pods that ripen in October and contain a small number of brownish-black seeds. The tree got its name because pioneers collected the seeds, ground them, and used them as a coffee substitute - even though many other parts of the tree are poisonous.

People have used crushed leaves mixed with molasses as a fly poison; the mixture attracts swarms of bothersome insects. Pulp from the coffee tree was used by Native Americans as a treatment for insanity. A tea made from the leaves and pulp was used as a laxative; a tea made from the root bark was used as a cough syrup and it was also given to women during childbirth.

The tree furnishes woodworkers with a mahogany-like timber which is suitable for cabinet-making, but the lumber is rarely available except from specialty dealers. The wood is very rot resistant and was used for fence posts and railroad ties even though it was not readily available in appropriate lengths due to its habit of forking close to the ground.

You will find the Kentucky coffee tree here at Landis, up on the hill directly behind the lilac collection. To find the tree, go directly across the road from the Meeting House, take a left into the lilac collection, go through the collection on your right and walk straight back to the little hillside. If you aren't familiar with this tree, come on out and get acquainted with a great landscape specimen.



Drawings of the background leaves and the twig (right) are by Anne Jaster. The twig is drawn actual size and shows prominent leaf and bud scars.

Pod and flower drawings are from Sargeant's Manual of the Trees of North America.





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Fall Plant Sale, September 11 & 12, 10-4



How Does Our Garden Grow?

New Members – Please note that the names listed here are new members that joined during the second quarter of 1999. We wish you **welcome!** A complete list of members and contributors is available once each year.

George & Alice Alverson
Jackie & James Barnhart
Brea Barthel
Karen Bauer
Leslie Benton
Paul Blair
Betty Bloom
Susan Bramer
Laura Brandis
Karen Brown
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Kathy & George LaJeunesse
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Jane McCloskey
Mark McDonald
Sandra McGarraugh
Elaine Miller
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Naylor
Gina Nielsen
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Robert & Carole Olsen
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