

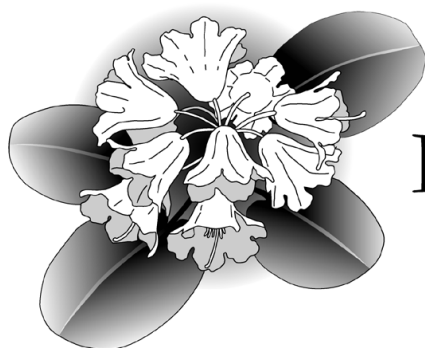
# AtlanticRhodo

[www.AtlanticRhodo.org](http://www.AtlanticRhodo.org)

Volume 47: Number 2

May 2023





# Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

## Our Mission

*ARHS supports and promotes the development and exchange of expertise and material relating to the creation and maintenance of year-round garden landscapes featuring rhododendrons and other plants.*

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Photos in articles are by the authors, unless otherwise identified.

## Membership

**Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society (ARHS).** Membership renewals are now **overdue**. The current membership period is September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023. The membership fee is \$30.00. For benefits and to download a membership form see ARHS website [www.atlanticrhodo.org](http://www.atlanticrhodo.org)

**American Rhododendron Society:** ARHS is a chapter in District 12 of the American Rhododendron Society. Combined ARHS and ARS membership cost is \$84.00 Canadian.

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society, should be sent to **Jim Sharpe, 6231 Watt St, Halifax, NS B3H 2B9**. Payment may be made by e-transfer to [atlanticrhodo@gmail.com](mailto:atlanticrhodo@gmail.com). Please include name, address with postal code, e-mail address and telephone number, for organizational purposes only. The Society is working on an on-line payment system. All details will be available on the Website when the new system is ready.

**AtlanticRhodo** is the Newsletter of the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society. We welcome your comments, suggestions, articles, photos and other material for publication. Send all material to the editor.

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Cover Photo: *Rhododendron* 'Janet Blair'. [Photo Sterling Levy]





## Calendar of Events

Meetings are normally held in the Nova Scotia Museum Auditorium. *Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St. Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada*

Meeting notices will include a sign-up form for those who wish to attend in person. Space will be limited due to social distancing requirements as posted by Public Health at the time. The ARHS will continue to offer our programming by Zoom for those who cannot attend in person. Details and link will be sent to members.

**Your new program will start in September**

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## A Word from the Editor - In this Issue

**Dennis L. Stuebing, PhD**

This weekend the temperatures shifted. We've gone from a long, cold Spring, headlong into summer. In the Valley, the change was most welcome for the annual Apple Blossom Festival but the heat and what seems to be a deficit of rainfall, have no doubt exacerbated the wildfires raging in Upper Tantallon and surrounding areas, as I write this introduction to Issue 2, of Volume 47. I hope everyone is safe and able to recover quickly from the fires. I fear this is an omen of the summer ahead, but I won't put to paper such negative thoughts and instead trust that our readers will all find joy as we all embark on another garden season.

In this issue, along with Jim Sharpe's President's Report, you will find a retrospective of the garden tours that happened earlier this month. Thanks to the members who opened their gardens to us. You will also find Quincy Russell's wonderful description of their journey in becoming a plant-ologist. Bob Howard kindly reminds us of the 'magnificence' of weeding and garden maintenance activities and Jim Sharpe reports on the joint American Rhododendron Society and Azalea Society of America's Convention that took place in Atlanta, Georgia. Finally, you will find Jenny Sandison's article on *rhododendron* garden design trends from the United Kingdom. You'll recall that Jenny presented to the Society as part of the 2023 program.

Thanks to all of our contributors. And, as always, I want to express my deepest appreciation to Sterling Levy for his efforts in making this issue look as stunning as always. As I type this final line, the wind has stopped, and I can hear rain coming down outside. A new omen? I'll take it! Here's to a great summer! Happy gardening. ☼



*Jeffersonia dubia*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]

## President's Report

Jim Sharpe

While attending the American Rhododendron Society (ARS)/Azalea Society of America (ASA) Convention April 19-22, I realized the strength of our society and the unique conditions which we have in the Atlantic Provinces for growing rhodos and azaleas. At 130+ members, our group is one of the larger chapters of the ARS, although most do not have the dual registration (local and ARS) which we continue to provide. Our talks, plant sales, and garden tours, are similar to that of other clubs, but the scale of the US plant sales is impressive. There were over 3000 rhodos and azaleas on sale at the Convention with a computer-based tag system to keep track of inventory, sales, and costs. Although we complain about our late springs and cool summer temperatures, our rhodos and azaleas can be much more spectacular in the number, density, and flowing time for blooms than those with higher nighttime temperatures.

After the Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, I visited Asheville, North Carolina to see the azalea collection of the North Carolina Arboretum. I had met the curator of this collection on a pre-convention tour, canoeing down the Class I and II rapids of the Flint River, south of Atlanta. The Mountain Laurel was in full bloom covering the hillside! I was also with Ralf Bauer, an azalea botanist from Germany and Tara Spears, the curator of the rhodo collection of Jenkins Arboretum near Philadelphia. Ralf took tissue samples of *Rhododendron minus* which was in full bloom near the end of the trip. I realized during the convention when Don Hyatt presented with Ralf and Lisa, that Ralf had recently published (2021) on a new azalea species, *Rhododendron smokianum*, from the Great Smoky Mountains and Tara was decoding the complex polyploid DNA. Such is the nature of ARS Conventions where you can end up guiding a canoe down the river with plant explorers!

Charile Andrews and Mike Bamford organized a great Convention with tours, a 3000+ plant sale of hard-to-source rhodos and azaleas, and inspiring speakers. The new ARS President is Linda Derkach from Parksville, British Columbia and Mike Bamford from Atlanta, Georgia, is the new Eastern Vice-President, so there is great leadership for the future of the ARS. They all expressed disappointment at not being able to visit Nova Scotia for the 2021 Convention and hope that we will host an ARS event again soon.

Like all plant and gardening societies, the ARS membership skews to retired and older gardeners. However, there was an important discussion on how to use our organizational assets to attract new members. It was pointed out that ARS chapters have tremendous horticultural knowledge and experience which new gardeners are anxious to learn. The increasing interest in native plants is also important as North America is the source for most of the world's deciduous azaleas as well as many important companion perennials. Use of social media and new plant discussion groups are seen as the future for wider engagement.

In general, I'm impressed by the knowledge that our ARHS members possesses. Our cool summers and mild winters allow for a much wider variety of rhodos than can be grown in most of the continental United States. We have a tradition of rhodo hybridizing and pushing the limits. Our membership is strong, at 130 which is much larger than many ARS chapters. We have almost 900 followers on our Facebook page. I think that with further mentoring and support we can be open to newer gardeners who want to learn about the use of rhodos and companion plants in their gardens and landscapes.

May was the month of our plant sales, with Tuesday May 2<sup>nd</sup> as the Member-to-Member sale at the NS Museum and Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> was the pickup date for the pre-ordered plant sale at St. James Anglican Church in Boutilliers Point. It appears that our first order of North American native perennials from North Creek Nursery in Pennsylvania was a success.

On May 20-21 we had our garden visit to Annapolis Royal for a special tour of the Historic Gardens and viewing of three exceptional gardens in the Granville Beach area. That ended with the opportunity to view and purchase at the Rare and Unusual Plant Sale on Sunday afternoon.

We have been notified by the Nova Scotia Museum that we cannot continue to use their locker for our library. Since the COVID closure in 2020, the books (see collection list at <http://atlanticrhodo.org/arhs-library/>) were transferred to the home of Frances Howard in Dartmouth, but there has been very little circulation of the books since that time. The ARHS Board discussed the possibilities for continuing this service and decided that it was time to sell the collection to ARHS members. Frances has agreed to have book sale and open garden on the last Sunday afternoon of August 27 from 2 – 4 pm. Given the success of last year's book signing at Donna Evers' garden, we are looking forward to this summer event.

For next fall's program, we have confirmed Sam Hoadley, Director of the Research Trials for Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware, for the Steele Lecture on Tuesday, October 3. He will speak on their trials of native North American plants for gardens. The Nova Scotia Rock Garden Club is also bringing several international speakers this fall so we may have some special joint lectures with them as well. The full program will be announced in the August issue of *AtlanticRhodo* and by e-mail.



One important event that is happening this spring is the Conference and Annual General Meeting of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) in Truro from June 8-11 (see [NARGS23.org](http://NARGS23.org)). I end this report with word from Panayoti Kelaidis, NARGS President, about gardening in Nova Scotia based on his 2014 visit. If you want to help host Panayoti and other plant enthusiasts who are coming from across Canada and the US please contact the volunteer coordinator for NARGS 2022 or anyone of the planning committee including myself, Roslyn Duffus, Rebecca Lancaster, or Darwin Carr.

### *Message in NARGS Quarterly, Spring 2023*

I visited Nova Scotia in May eight years ago. For a steppe child like myself, the magical maritime setting was enchanting – this is a corner of our continent almost the polar opposite of where I’ve lived all my life. I should not of (sic) been surprised, but the plants grow differently here: I’ve never seen such magnificent *Rhododendrons* anywhere (the maritime air seems to suit them better than the somewhat Mediterranean Pacific Northwest or even England with their even more frequent summer droughts) and of course, so many European, American, and especially Himalayan alpine love the cool and lushness. They were growing so much more lustily that they do on our high, dry and windy steppe. Every garden I visited was different, and every one was a gem.

Bernard Jackson is unquestionably the greatest builder of classic rock gardens of our time: his Newfoundland creation at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John’s is a gem celebrated at one of our recent general meetings. He went on to create another masterpiece at the Dalhousie University’s campus in Truro which I admired immensely on my last visit. This has been expanded with an enormous, artful limestone crevice garden I’ve not seen yet and can’t wait to do so. This will be a centerpiece of this year’s annual general meeting. Let’s not forget that Canada is the second largest country in the world after Russia-- 3.8 million square miles to be exact.

Almost all of which is prime territory for growing rock garden plants and more and more an epicenter of our art.

I feel this isn’t just a trip for me, it’s a homecoming! I hope to see you there!

Panayoti Kelaidis  
President, North American Rock Garden Society



*Sanguinaria canadensis*. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



## Report on Convention of Azalea Society of America/American Rhododendron Society, Atlanta, Georgia, April 19-22, 2023

Jim Sharpe

I was one of four Canadians who attended the joint Azalea Society of America (ASA)/American Rhododendron Society (ARS) convention, “Georgia, with Azaleas on My Mind”, in suburban Atlanta in April. The first night I met ARS President, Bill Meyers, ASA President and Convention organizer Charlie Andrews, Don Hyatt, *azalea* explorer and enthusiast, and David Banks, ARS Treasurer, from Virginia, who all expressed great interest in coming to Nova Scotia.

On the first full day, as I did not need to participate in the ARS Board meeting, I went on the pre-conference tour; a canoe trip down the Flint River, which is very famous for its *azaleas*. There were only five on the trip, but we had a great time paddling down the river, as the Mountain Laurel was in full bloom.



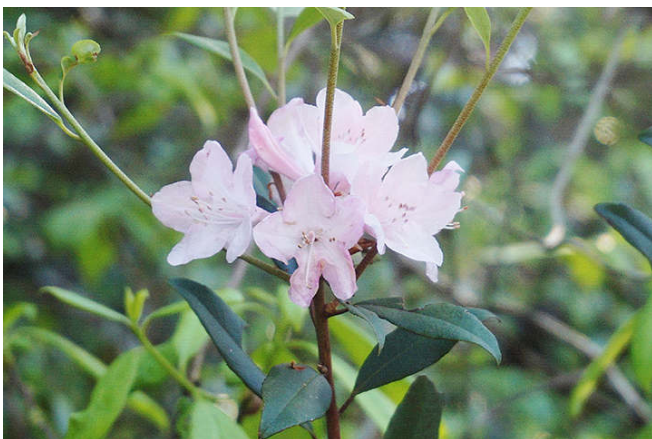
Paddling down the Flint River in Georgia.



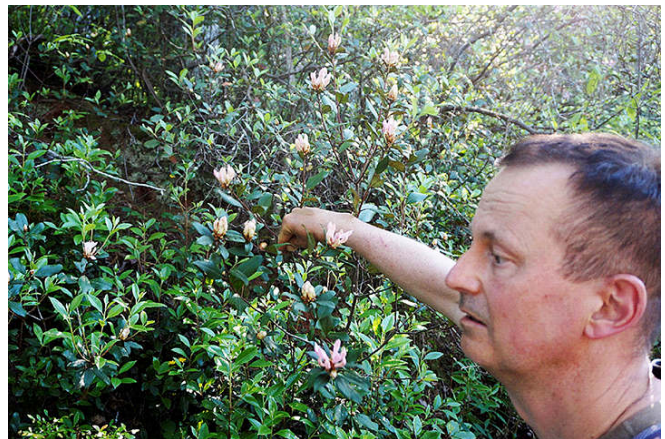
Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) in full bloom throughout the woods.

The group consisted of botanists and curators of *azalea* and *rhododendron* collections, so I learned a great deal about *azalea* habitat and distribution. Ralf Bauer, a botanist from Germany, recently discovered “*Rhododendron smokianum*” a new *azalea* species from the Great Smoky Mountains. Tara Spears is the curator of the *rhododendron* collection at Jenkins Arboretum in suburban Philadelphia. Carson Ellis was the curator of the *azalea* collection at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville.

After our canoe trip I accompanied Ralf Bauer to get a tissue sample of *Rhododendron minus* growing near the bridge by the river.



*Rhododendron minus*



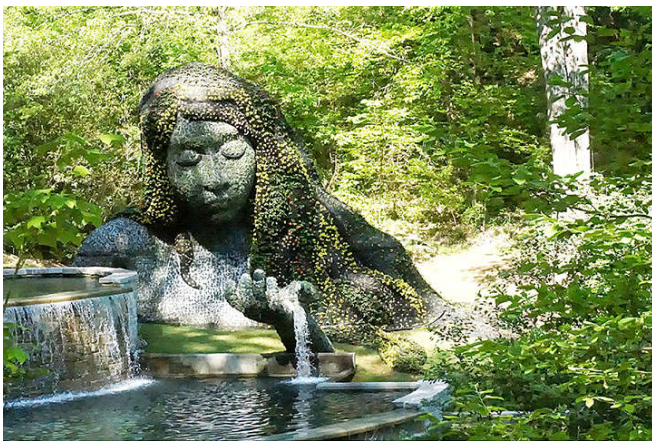
Ralf Bauer pointing out *Rhododendron minus* form and habitat



One of the most interesting parts of ARS Conventions is the *rhododendron* enthusiasts who you meet. At the opening reception I met John Perkins from Salem, New Hampshire. John is an expert on polyploid *rhododendrons* for plant breeding and was very impressed by the poster sessions held at the opening reception with the latest research from a group of a dozen graduate students and post-doctoral fellows on *rhododendron* distribution, genetics, and propagation for specific characteristics.

The next day of the first conference tour I sat on the bus with Linda Derkach, the new ARS President from Mt. Arrowsmith Chapter on Vancouver Island. Linda has been Secretary of the ARS for ten years and she was very supportive when we were planning the virtual ARS Convention in 2021. Vancouver Island has five ARS Chapters, the greatest membership concentration anywhere in North America, and they are very active with display gardens, propagation, tours, and meetings. She is looking forward to more participation at ARS conventions as COVID concerns ease and future regional and national meetings can have more accessibility, less cost, and more networking.

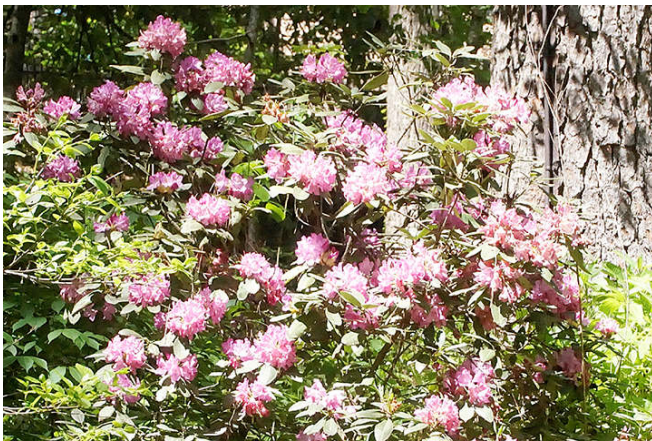
On the bus tour we visited two Atlanta institutions, the Atlanta Botanical Gardens and the Goizueta Gardens at the Atlanta History Centre. The Botanical Gardens has a great plant mosaic in their Cascades Garden: 'Earth Goddess' created by Mosaicultures Internationales de Montreal.



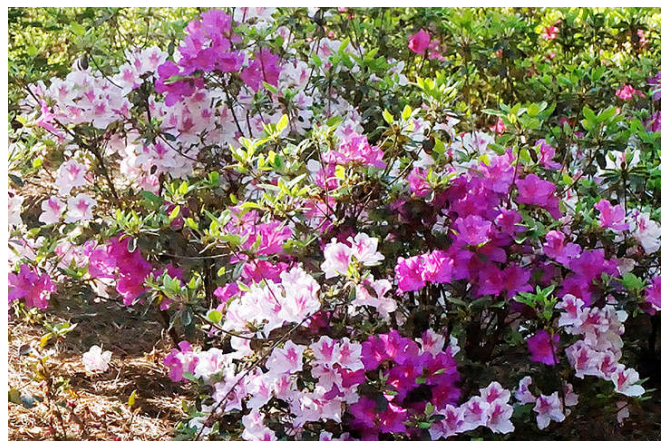
Earth Goddess' flora sculpture at Atlanta Botanical Gardenst,



Formal Swan House Mansion at Atlanta History Center



At the Goizuneta Gardens, some rhodos were in bloom



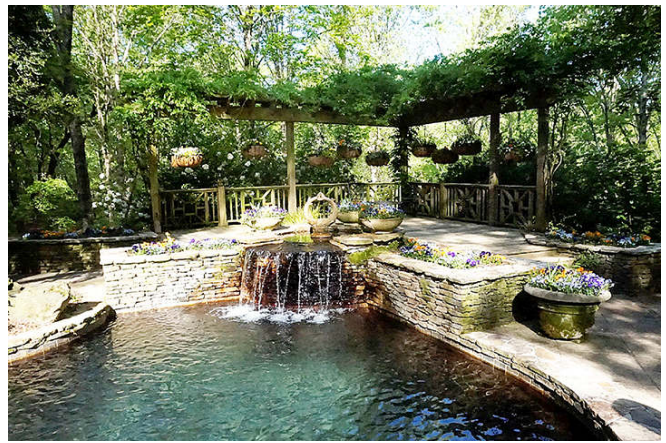
Gale Gardens.

On the second full day of tours, we visited two more gardens north of Atlanta: Gale Gardens and Babyland. Gale Gardens was very impressive, with water gardens, woodland gardens, and a great collection of *azaleas* and *rhodos*. It is in a cooler climate than Atlanta, so many more plants were in full bloom. Here are some photos of what was in full flower:



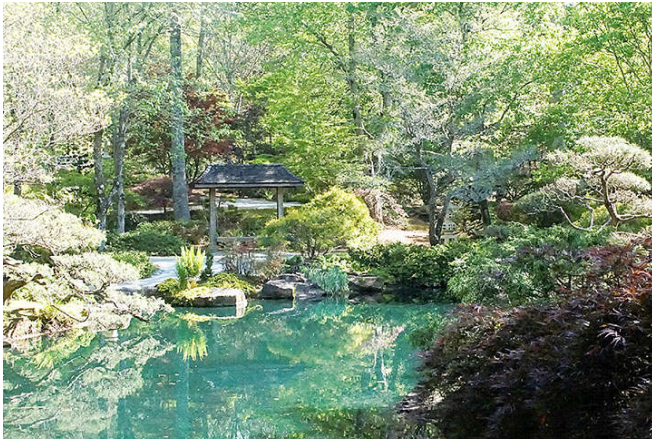


Gale Gardens.



Gale Gardens.

The quality of the hardscaping, Japanese garden, and Monet bridge were exceptional (depicted in photos).



Gale Gardens.



Gale Gardens.

After two hours at the Gale Garden, we went about thirty minutes to Babyland, the home of the Cabbage Patch Kids. The creator of this 80s toy craze, Xavier Roberts, hosted us for a luncheon on the back verandah of Babyland Hospital. He is also a gardener, and he has a great collection of *azaleas* and *amaryllis*. His property includes two ponds, fed by a spring, which had a great collection of large pitcher plants.



Babyland



Babyland





Pitcher plant at Babyland

Saturday was the day for presentations. Don Hyatt, Ralf Bauer, and Tara Speers presented on the discovery, classification, and DNA analysis of *Rhododendron smokianum*. For more information please see: <https://bioone.org/journals/systematic-botany/volume-46/issue-1/036364421X16128061189594/Rhododendron-smokianum-A-New-Species-from-the-Great-Smoky-Mountains/10.1600/036364421X16128061189594.full>.

Dr. Juliana Maderios chaired a panel discussion of researchers and graduate students on “New Developments in *Rhododendron* Research.” Linda Derkach conducted a session on how to increase participation at your rhodo club through bus tours, trial gardens, and propagation schemes.

The ARS Banquet on Saturday night featured an award to John Perkins for his work promoting rhodos. The speaker was Tom Johnson who described his travel as ‘a Georgia dirt farmer to Versailles’. Tom was hired as the horticulturalist for the Carter Centre and Library when he was in his 20s and learned Japanese gardening from a master. He went on to be the Executive Director of the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina, the first American botanical garden to accept interns from Versailles. He gave a very humorous talk on his experiences in the world of horticulture.

On Sunday there was a post conference tour to see the *azaleas* at Hurricane Creek. This special area cared for by Charlie Andrews, the conference coordinator and President of the Azalea Society of America, is a 200 acre nature reserve in former moonshine country, an hour north of Atlanta. Charlie had all the *azaleas* tagged for identification in his database. He provided a great tour of woodland plants and *azaleas* in full bloom.



Charlie Andrews with Flame Azalea at Hurricane Creek, Georgia



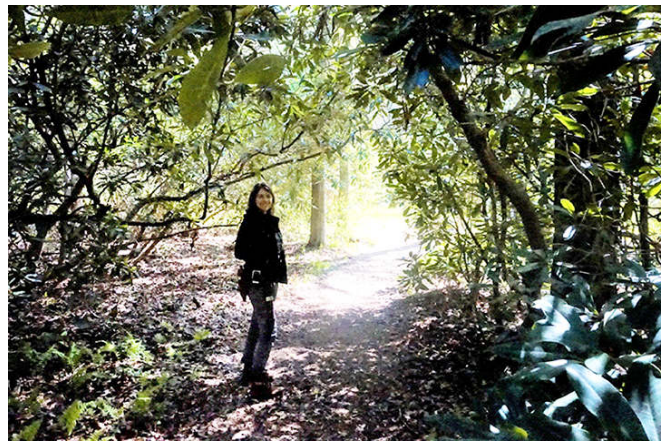
Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*. ) in the woods at Hurricane Creek

After spending two to three hours in the woods viewing *azaleas*, I drove east and north to Asheville, North Carolina. The next day I visited Carson Ellis, Curator of the Azalea Collection of the North Carolina Arboretum part of the Biltmore estate. She was very interested in the cultural conditions to grow *Rhododendron canadense* as it currently is not part of their collection. She was preparing for a “Azalea Open Garden Day” on the upcoming weekend.



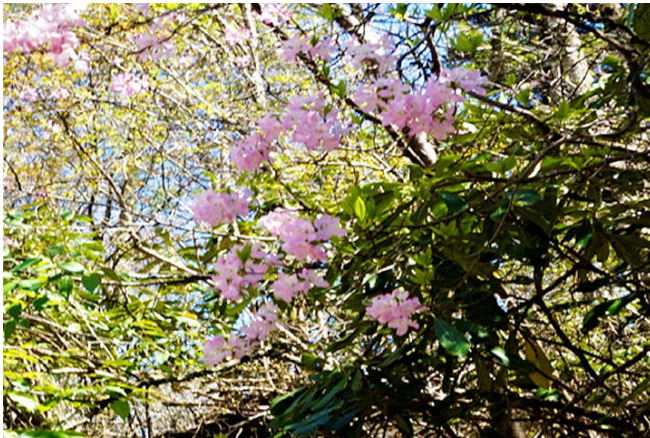


Flame azalea (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*) at North Carolina Arboretum.

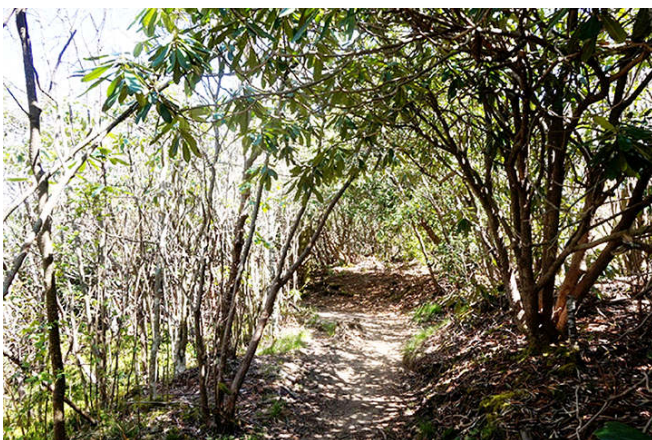


Carson Ellis, Curator of Azaleas at NC Botanical Garden along trail through azaleas.

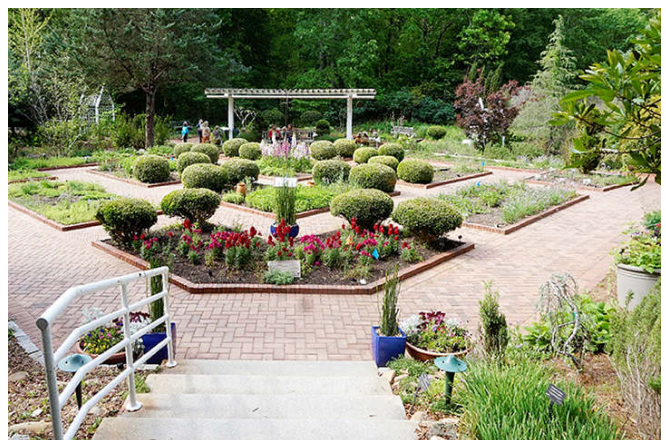
After my morning visit, I went for a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway, which was the reason I wanted to visit Asheville and the Appalachian region. The parkway is almost 500 miles long, and I only drove a 55 mile section, which took me five hours, but what an experience. The section west of Asheville is the highest section, ascending to over 6000 feet and has many tunnels. There are look-outs every mile or so. I found some *azaleas* in bloom and went for a hike at Graveyard Fields, a natural area full of rhodos.



Azalea growing by the Blue Ridge Parkway at Mile 417



Trail through rhodos at Graveyard Fields, Blue Ridge Parkway.



Georgia Botanical Garden in Athens, GA

The next morning, I left for the four-hour drive back to Atlanta. I had time to stop at the University of Georgia Botanical Garden in Athens on the way to the airport. In all, in a week, I viewed six formal gardens, visited three extraordinary natural areas for *azaleas*, heard some great speakers and met some wonderful *azalea* and *rhododendron* enthusiasts! I invite members of ARHS to consider attending future ARS conferences in Florence, Oregon, October 21-22, 2023, and/or Bellingham, Washington, May 2-5, 2024. The ARS Executive is hoping to come back to the Northeast in spring 2025. ♡



# Weeding and Experience

**Bob Howard**

Let me begin with a long quote,

One of my sisters providentially came for a holiday and helped me clear the weeds from the bank. We had a magnificent time clearing the ground, because there was a lot of bindweed there, as well as the easier weeds. We both agreed that there is no sport in the world that compares with clearing the ground of bindweed. It is far more exciting than golf or fishing”.

Fish, M. (1956). *We Made a Garden*

Do you believe her, that she vanquished bindweed by manual weeding? I do. Margery Fish was a prodigious worker. And do you believe that she really enjoyed weeding? I do. We all aim to eliminate or reduce weeds, but then gardening is an activity, and weeding in one of our principal tasks. Weeding, watering, mulching, planting, pruning, these are the physical activities that get us outdoors, feeling, listening, seeing, touching, and experiencing the garden and nature.

Being in the garden doing things is a time when I think about new plants and design ideas, recall friends who gave me a plant, imagine travels to see other gardens. It's the occasion for observing new things popping up in the spring, insect activity, and which plants need pruning. In this article, I'd like to show you a few things I've noticed while weeding this spring.

But first a brief overview of my approach to weed management. I have two basic ideas: first, remove perennial roots and prevent them from pushing back in from the edges; second, remove annuals before they bloom and prevent their seed germination. I employ several different tactics trying to accomplish this.

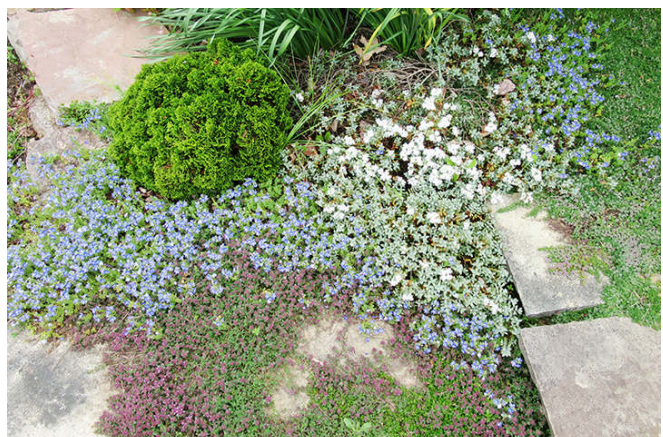
Beginning with the least interference, I have an area where I just plant something and let it outgrow its neighbors to eventually shade out the ground layer. For example, in one area with appropriate native soil, I plant rhododendrons. I slightly improve the soil to fill in the hole, mulch around the base of the plant, and weed whip between the rhododendrons a few times each year. I do not disturb the surrounding soil or pull weeds except for something that might overgrow the rhododendrons, like a multiflora rose seedling for example.

When I interfere more, for instance when I need to eliminate large “weeds” like glossy buckthorn and brambles, and I need to disturb the soil, I remove all the weedy perennial roots, add organic matter to the soil, and mulch heavily. I have an area like this where I'm planting shrubs and small trees, like Korean maples, hydrangeas, rhododendrons, and so on. Once prepped and planted, I applied three inches or so of wood chips to the area. I did not put plastic or weed barrier under the mulch because I still want to be able to plant. Then I top up the mulch every year. I weed very little in this area. On a smaller scale, I also use stone chip mulch in the rock garden



Stone Chip Mulch

This leads into my favourite weed management technique: living mulch. Living mulch is living plants growing together tightly and doing all the good things that mulch does: shading the soil and moderating soil temperature, conserving moisture, reducing weed seed germination, breaking rainfall and reducing erosion, and enriching soil life. Plus, it looks great!

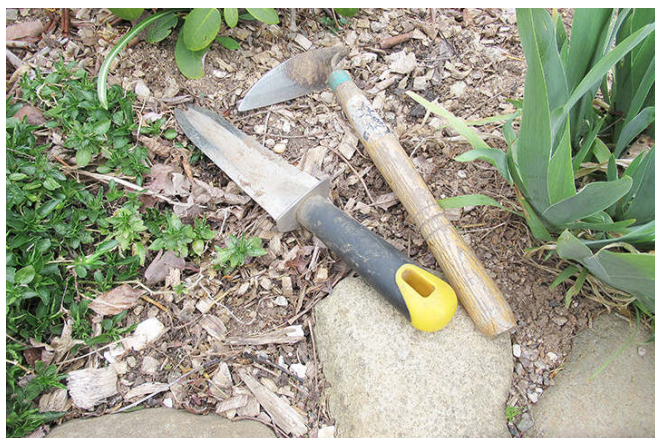


Living Mulch

Some areas require more work. In my perennial border, rock garden, and mixed shrub-perennial-bulb areas, I disturb the soil more frequently. I plant new things and in doing so, expose bare soil. Also, perennials, deciduous shrubs, and bulbs lose their leaves for several months exposing bare soil in which weed seeds can germinate. Creeping perennial weeds like field sorrel also work their way into the beds from the edges. This calls for regular observation and weeding. My favourite tools for doing



this hand work are a “weeding knife” and a small hand hoe called a “traditional Japanese weeder”.



Weeding knife and traditional Japanese weeder

I find that these more plant-rich gardens, ones with greater variety of plants growing intricately together, have fewer weeds as they mature. Our rock garden is the first garden I made when we moved here. It now requires the least weeding of my plant-rich gardens. I spend maybe two hours a month weeding and dead-heading there. It required many more hours of attention in its early years.

Finally, the most weeding intensive area is the vegetable garden. Vegetables are mostly annuals. I add compost and dig regularly so there’s often some freshly exposed soil. Annual weeds will germinate there in competition with the vegetables. I mulch the paths. But there’s no other tactic beyond that for me but physical weeding—and for the most part I enjoy it. I agree with Margery Fish when she expressed her satisfaction with weeding. It’s a joy to get up from a session of weeding and see the neat groups of young vegetables in their tidy beds.

Now back to my opening comments about working in the garden and a feeling of well-being. Beyond the task-completed satisfaction of weeding, and because it puts me up close, I noticed some wonderful things this spring. For instance, I found tens of new hellebore seedlings at the foot of the variety *Hellebore* ‘Pink Blush’.



*Hellebore* ‘Pink Blush’ seedlings

In my woodland shrub area, I noticed some pink fawn lilies (*Erythronium revolutum*). I had forgotten they were there. Luckily, they were in bud, I noticed them, and then I noticed they too had produced many seedlings.



Pink Fawn Lily

That felt so good. I also noticed, just in time to not pull out a weed that had mixed in with it, tiny *Meconopsis* leaves. They were a small division of a plant from Walter Ostrum. It’s either ‘Slieve Donard’ or his own variety that he calls ‘Indian Harbour’. In a future article, I’ll show it in flower.



*Meconopsis* in the weeds.

I noticed that my *Helleborus purpureus* is flowering for the first time; I felt a fresh breeze and the warm spring sun; and, like Margey Fish, I was enjoying a magnificent time. ☺



## Sewing a Plantologist: The Patchwork Origins of a “Mature Student” of Horticulture

Quincy Russell

As a nature-loving kid, on our suburban lot, I wanted for nothing – I had a plum tree to climb, a hedge with a secret portal to another world, and endless seasonal marvels that would magically recur year after year. My parents, I would later learn, wished for a “Rodo”. To me, my parents were expert gardeners – I didn’t know how the natural world worked, but I knew my parents were always doing something out there. However, when we moved to a newer sub-division, to a lot adorned with little but turf grass, it became apparent to me that the mature plants I had come to love had been the fruits of labour that long preceded my parents’ weekend efforts – here, tasked with *making* a garden, we were all novices. Fueled by a good amount of homesickness for the old house, teenage angst, and little patience, I eagerly set to digging the new beds - I should mention here I have a sister, and although she’s come to be a gardener in recent years, it seemed in those years she’d found her happy place elsewhere. For me, however, the seeds were sewn.



Robertson Tran Garden.

I grew up in Kjiptuk, colonially known as the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), in the community of Cole Harbour where wilderness, gardens and proximity to agriculture (having been, in recent history, the bread-basket of the region) has instilled in me a love of nature. Among my millennial contemporaries, however, I am the exception because I routinely had to fight to maintain this relationship. Like the fences marking my friends’ property lines, the suburban middle-class trappings our families, role-models, and societal values subscribed to defied the natural landscape we called home. Don’t get me wrong, there were times when T.V., videogames and the internet became more familiar to me than the outdoors; views across the forest came from second story windows at the fitness centre; and the feverish hunt for “a real job” included a very short list of corporate employers. But my interest in horticulture had, despite everything, taken root.



Robertson Tran Garden.

In choosing a career path, it had never occurred to me that working with the land was possible. Even while mowing lawns and wanting to follow in my grandfather’s entrepreneurial footsteps, who himself ran a property maintenance business, it hadn’t occurred to either of us that we were participating in a vast industry called horticulture, where I could make a viable career for myself. Instead, I was well-supported in my pursuit of carpentry which I had little experience in and ultimately felt I did not have a part. My role models in the trade, as well as skilled, were kind; respectful and fond of their jobs, traits I found scarce in the industry. After a few years of personal exploration, travelling, and experimenting, I found myself gravitating to the arts community, perhaps for good reason (‘actor’ was my dream job, circa grade 6). This was a sector where I felt welcomed, respected and allowed to be myself, the traits exhibited by my original role models. Working primarily with DaPoPo Theatre, a Halifax-based company interested in supporting established and emerging artists alike, in the development of new works and productions that are “Da’ring, “Po”litical and “Po”etic, I accepted opportunities to develop skills in acting, writing, performance creation and, production management. It wasn’t horticulture, but it was a creative home.

A decade working in a vibrant though chronically under-funded arts sector while living in a vibrant though over-priced North-End neighborhood, had me ‘side-hustling’ as a handy-person in carpentry and, more recently, property maintenance. Finally, in April 2020, and in anticipation for what would become a multi-year effective closure of the arts sector, I set out, in a Dodge Neon my parents lent me, to seasonally and routinely care for a roster of properties in the HRM, a return to the work of my childhood.



Gaps in my knowledge became evident, quickly. In the beginning, I felt confident with the wealth of experience I had to draw from, but as the season progressed, I started to become aware of problems (environmental, pest, and disease) affecting my clients' gardens, beyond my experience. Having met my limits and the limits of my Neon "Amy", in 2021 I applied and was admitted into the Diploma of Technology in Managed Landscapes at Dalhousie's Agricultural Campus, where I've found supportive mentorship in horticultural knowledge and skills as varied as my own interests.

My program has given me an introduction to the design profession, which has offered me a creative outlet, allowing me to draw upon my arts background. Of my initial interest in plant health, I have been pleased to learn of its mutual relationship with design, which also addresses broad concepts from ecology, construction, and storytelling through planning for the human experience. Returning to school has also been an invitation to work through my personal relationship with education, which I hadn't enjoyed before now. I am better able to understand why I never enjoyed it before and what I need to be successful now. School has been an opportunity to connect with a community of people who are interested in plants, gardens, and design that I never knew existed before. It has been an introduction and exposure to the vastness of the green industry and a creative outlet, where my ambitions in gardening and landscape design have found a home. Over the years I happened upon people in disparate conversations where there's been a lot of excitement around gardening. Very seldom did that generate any sort of action, but at school, there is a sense that I can both get excited, and do something about it. Serving as student liaison with Landscape Nova Scotia, I will be contributing to the connection between my fellow students and the green industry. Going into my fourth season of gardening, I look forward to the continued maintenance of gardens and properties with particular attention to the health of plants. This spring, in partnership with Everyone Everyday Festival and the North-End Business Association (NEBA), I will be sharing my knowledge in workshops on designing and planting gardens, which will culminate in an initiative planting a series of planters in my neighbourhood, on Gottingen Street.

From the nature-loving kid for whom the sole authority on matters of plants were his novice-gardener parents, to a nature-loving adult whose interest in promoting horticulture and the opportunities it can offer to mental health, public life, and adapting to the climate crisis, it is only in retrospect that the thread, connecting the experiences that form these patchwork origins, can be followed. With respect for these formative experiences, I hope that young gardeners may emerge from communities, like mine, and experience the encouragement I've received as I embark on my career. "Our son the plantologist!" my proud father recently exclaimed, seeing his son thrive, if lacking the words for it. ♪



Managed Landscapes Installation.



School Managed Landscapes - Echohydrology

## 2023 Garden Tours

The following is a retrospective of the gardens that were part of the May 2023 ARHS garden tours. Thank you to the homeowners and gardeners for sharing their time and ‘living art’ with us.

### Long Branch Studios, Port Royal

Susan Tooke and the late Richard Rudnicki

When asked if I would have my garden on the garden tour this year, I first needed to say I am a working artist. I am not hugely knowledgeable on the Latin names of plants; I leave that to minds like Lorraine Beswick with her terrific memory for detail. But I will say that my strength is in seeing the big picture, and the tiny detail. These macro and micro-observations are what keep me engaged in gardening.

Long Branch Studios is located at the base of North Mountain with a terraced and rolling, landscape. Six acres or so of the property nearest Granville Road is cultivated with various garden plantings, including an orchard with a variety of apples, pears, and plums, and a large hay field. A mowed path winds up through the field along the installation of standing stones, (a dedication to my late husband, Richard Rudnicki), ending in the upper northwestern corner. A bench encourages contemplation of the view across the marsh to the Annapolis River Basin and beyond to the south mountain.

Ancient oaks spread their branches along Granville Road, the reason my late husband Richard Rudnicki named the property “Long Branch”. A row of mature pecan trees divide the orchard, and several butternut trees can be seen dotted about the property.

I have been blessed by inheriting the efforts of hard work and great expertise on the part of former residents. Nancy McCabe did a fabulous job of building a rock garden on the northern slope bordering the driveway. The basalt rock that was gathered by previous farmers when clearing the land forms the basis for the walls and steps leading up through the garden. Ornamental thyme, heaths and heathers, and dwarf evergreens are some of the plantings found on the terraces. Closer to the studio, there are multiple plantings of lavender, with many tulips and spring bulbs filling in any available space. It is also where I plant my vegetable garden, and I will be hard at work in late May getting the beds ready for growing food.

The buildings on the property are also of interest. The house was built by Adam Shafner in 1769 and many of the features of the original design, still remain. The lower red barn was built to be a store in 1866. Still visible are the lovely original doors marking the entry. The upper red barn contains a chicken coop with a large, attached run.

The large white barn connected to the house with a breezeway is my studio with the first floor dedicated to various projects including creating abstract soundscapes from field recordings. The second floor is dedicated to painting, drawing, and rug hooking. There is much more to see, should you wish to walk about the property.

### Karsdale Gardens

Lorraine Beswick and Frederick Longtin [Photos by Lorraine Bestwick]





Just below 'the Habitation' heading towards the Victoria Beach, on the mountain side of the road. The gardens here, thirty-three years evolving this summer, have like ourselves so changed.

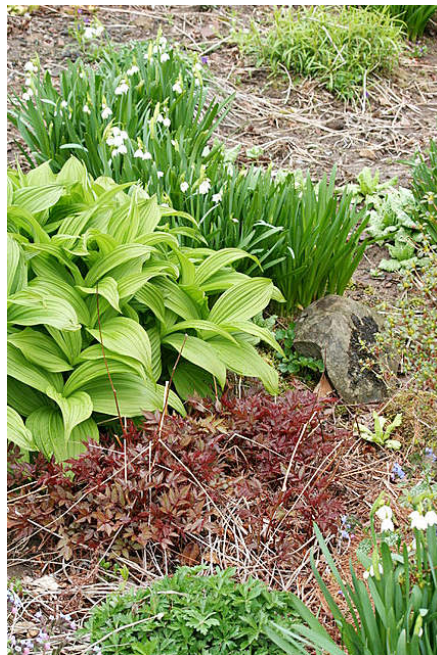
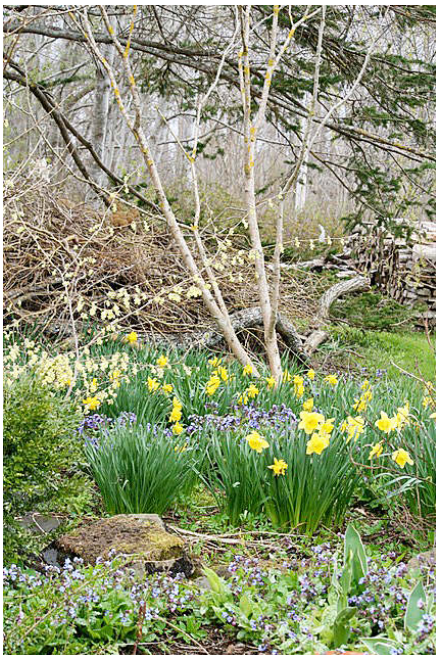
Upon our arrival in 1989, open fields, an ancient Baldwin apple tree, a dusty vegetable garden edged with raspberry canes....experiments in grafting pears and apples elsewhere, all indicated an earlier agricultural life. A great tangle of branches filling the front lawn, leafing out to be a storied *Cotinus coggygia*; a whip of centifolia rose within, single clump of *Paeonia rubra plena* without; elsewhere, delightful spring discoveries of *Narcissus flore pleno*, *N. poeticus* and 'King Alfred'; remnants of 19th century floral wallpaper inside this old house. Someone earlier had also loved gardening and flowers. Our own moving van, being one-third full of plant material; so we continued!

Originally and for many years, the focus was on flowers for cutting, for arranging in town and for special events. Time passing, small treasures and 'must haves' of flowering shrubs, evergreens, trees...growing, maturing, the flower gardens have long changed from annual and perennial collections, to what thrives and has survived weather and life chapters going forward.

Grassland once open is now shaded, moss or pine needle carpeted. The latter true, my small collection of *azaleas* and *rhododendrons* is happier. Assorted *rugosa* and historic roses, have quite settled in, while the David Austin's continue to be "individual"; same true of the peonies and more. Mortality reality no matter, some treasures are gone and are sadly missed. Others have grown to be glorious: magnolias, hedgerows of yews, (at last!) the *enkianthus*....the *corylopsis*, and *Cornus mas*.

Thirty years on now, planted that there always be something to pick, it is layered no matter where the eye rests. Never an immaculate or formal garden, it is hardly so now...but the meander is lovely, always something new coming into blossom no matter the season.

I do continue to plant and to tuck in, be it seasonal bulbs, yet more peonies, *hydrangeas*...ultimately what may grow to be graceful or stately trees. As I stretch yet more protective netting about, night visiting deer recently becoming more than dear, pruning and editing...my fingers remain crossed for a glorious show this Spring of new, old favourite tulips.





## Gramercy Park, Granville Beach

Bob and Dessie Howard



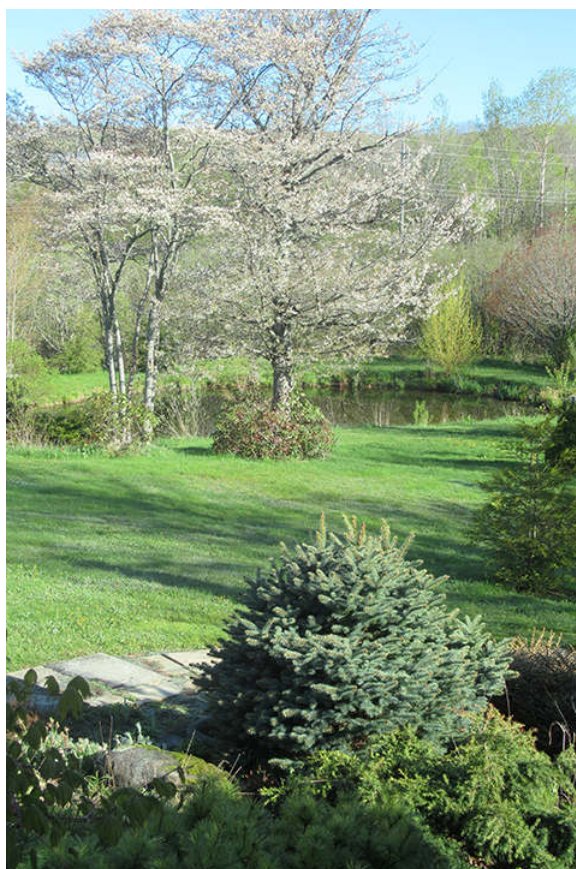
Epimedium 'Akebono'. [Photo Bob Howard]



Rhododendron 'Mist Maiden' . [Photo Bob Howard]

Our garden, Gramercy Park, is a six-and-a-half-acre property with views of woods, hay fields, and the Annapolis Basin. Several different gardens are laid out around the house, with short walks from one to the other, including an entry garden, a creek garden, a Korean maple garden and a woodland shrub area.

About eighty *rhododendron* species and cultivars are distributed throughout the gardens. In mid-May the rock garden features dwarf conifers, species bulbs, and *primulas*. The vegetable garden will just be starting. *Erythronium*, *fritillaria*, *hellebores*, and tulips are some of the bulbs that will probably be blooming in mid-May in the perennial and boxwood gardens. We have a *Salix alba* 'Britzensis' that I coppice. It grows beside the pond and should be colourful still. I have also made flagstone steps, rock-walls, and benches. We have a root cellar. ☐



May cherries and the pond. [Photo Bob Howard]



## Changes in Garden Design in the UK in my lifetime

Jenny Sandison

Visiting gardens is a national pastime in the UK and I was introduced to it quite early. My Dad was a good gardener and in my teens he would take his family to various large country houses.

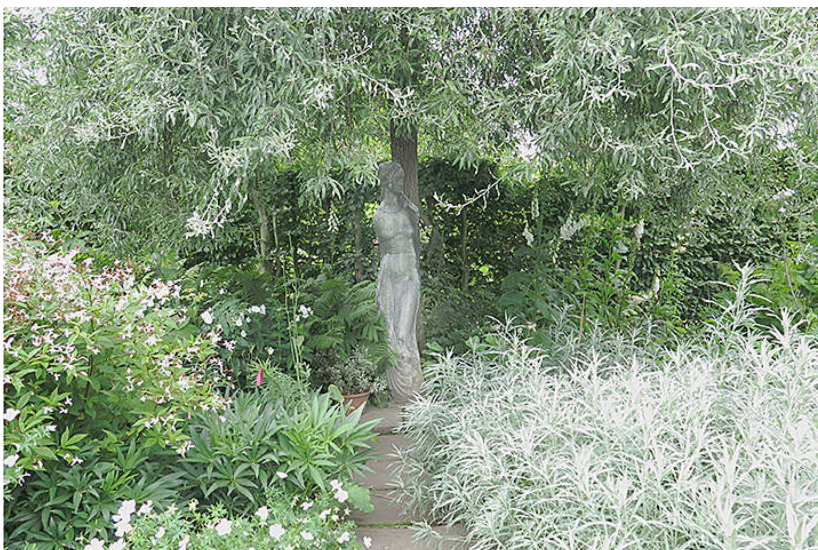
It was only when I came to Canada in my twenties and with my husband built a house in northern Vermont that I felt compelled to have a few flowers. My good friend Sally went to England and returned with about 15 good gardening books which I have read and re-read over the years.

Early on Vita Sackville-West was a real authority. She had a huge garden at Sissinghurst which she had created over many years and she wrote a weekly column in the Observer. She came from the Edwardian era where large gardens were divided up by tall walls and clipped hedges of yew. She liked the strong framework that these geometric outlines gave her but stressed that the planting should be quite informal within these outlines.



This is a view down from the tall Tudor tower giving an idea of the different small gardens she had made.

Along with her good friend Lawrence Johnson she experimented with using different colours in different areas and sought to play colour and texture. The White Garden became very influential and had many copies of it around the country. It used mostly white flowering plants but with a lot of silvery foliage. At the end of a path in this garden is a weeping silver pear and under it a lead statue of the Virgin. Plants spilling out include *Geranium sanguineum album*, *Artemisia* and taller at the left *Gillenia trifolia*.





Wisley is a garden I have visited many times. It is the flagship garden for the Royal Horticultural Society, the RHS, and as such presents in perfection many design ideas. The Herbaceous Border is one I always enjoy seeing. This concept, from the Victorian days, calls for a long border, maybe 100 yards in length, and very deep, maybe 25 feet, backed by a high clipped hedge usually of yew. The hedge gives protection and sets the plants off. The visitor wanders along admiring the flowers which are placed with tall ones at the rear and smaller ones towards the front but often there are obelisks with Clematis and other vines giving height and colour. I remember this day where two girls from Germany were busy noting down the names of the plants. Wisley is great in that they label most plants. Here the dark red is a new introduction at the time, *Astrantia* Ruby Wedding and just behind it I was pleased to see a new catmint Walker's Low that has become the backbone of my plantings these days.

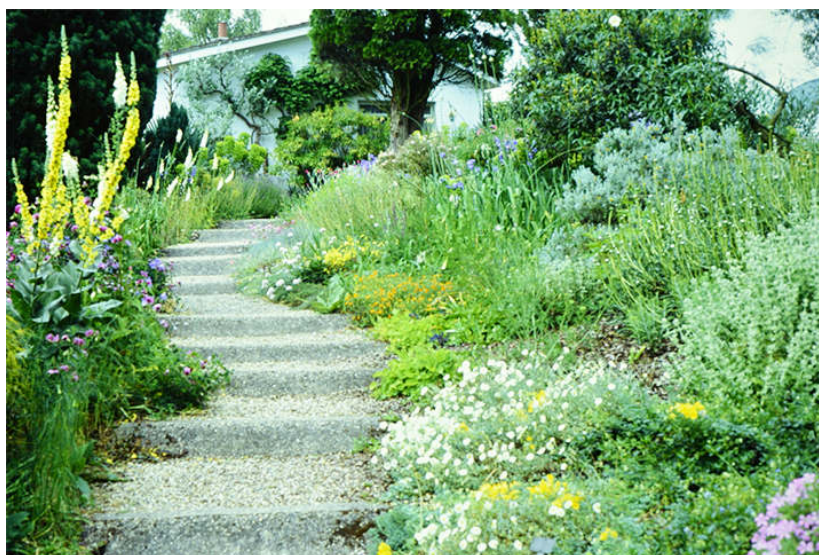


Another area within Wisley is called the Country Garden designed by Penelope Hobhouse. It is an idea for how the area around a large country house might be developed. Penelope also used hard landscaping with paths and seating and rose arches and a low central fountain to give a framework to the design but her planting is relaxed and the colours are restful.



Over the course of maybe twenty years. The influence of another great gardener began to be felt. Beth Chatto was a nurseryman and the topography of her garden included areas of free draining gravel and in the gully below the house quite damp conditions with more moisture retentive clay. In her book *The Dry Garden* she describes how on buying the land in late summer some of the soil was so dry it would just sift right through her fingers. Her great mantra was "Right plant, right place." Over the years she discovered what plants would grow in which place and in the very dry areas she found the plants from the Mediterranean area could cope with summer drought and indeed needed good drainage in winter to survive.





In this photo you can see geraniums, marjorams, tall yellow spikes of Mullein and tough evergreens. Also you immediately note the steps utilize a gentle curve and the whole feel of the area is more naturalistic. Beth saw the art of the gardeners as trying to echo the tranquility in nature rather than a bold display of colour.

In the gully bottom she dredged three ponds and here quite different plants are able to flourish. They often have big luxuriant leaves that need moisture such as *Gunneras* and *Rodgersias*.

Note no clipped hedges and straight lines here! The edge of the beds are gentle curves and it looks as though it exists naturally rather than has been imposed on the landscape.



The other part of her garden that became famous is the Gravel Garden.

This was originally a carpark. It's at the top of the land and is just this gravel she inherited. Beth also lives in Essex on the extreme east of the UK with a low rainfall. She is always bemoaning the lack of rain in her area. She decided to make this an experiment in xeriscaping. That's the use of plants which can grow naturally in an area with no irrigation. She did incorporate a lot of compost before planting but over the years has discovered which plants can survive the conditions and eliminated ones that couldn't. Plants that do well here are often low, small leaved and often silvery. They have made themselves small to minimize transpiration. It means you see over the beds quite easily so the placement of tall, thin uprights is needed to break up the mainly horizontal feel.





The “Gravel Garden”

Back to Wisley where there is a conscious effort to redo areas to showcase new ideas in design. About 10 years ago now the Dutch designer Piet Oudolf was invited to redo these two long borders.



You could say they are a modern interpretation of that Herbaceous Border idea. There is the same central path which invites you to walk along admiring the plants. The plants are backed by high plants behind them but instead of a formal clipped hedge they are large, loosely growing shrubs. Piet planted long strips at an angle to the main path using his trademark plants of late season perennials and grasses. We have come to call this Prairie style planting as many of the plants used are from North America. They include *Echinaceas*, *Veronicastrum*, *Persicarias*, *Rudbeckia* and many grasses.

Down by the Greenhouse lake in this shot are the flowers of *Miscanthus*, with small red buttons of *Sanguisorba*. This is quite sprawling but in these newer styles of planting that is accepted and staking is eliminated.





Also at Wisley I was interested to see part of the large garden become a meadow. Now in farming a meadow is a hayfield where the grass is cut once or maybe twice a year. Old meadows are wonderfully biodiverse as many wildflowers can tolerate the annual cutting and thrive as the cutting prevents shrubs and trees from taking over. This area demonstrated plants from South Africa which have colonized the grass. You can a pink Diascia, Red Hot poker and, new to me, that lilac daisy, which is *Burkheya* 'Zulu Warrior' and thanks to friends who identified it for me.



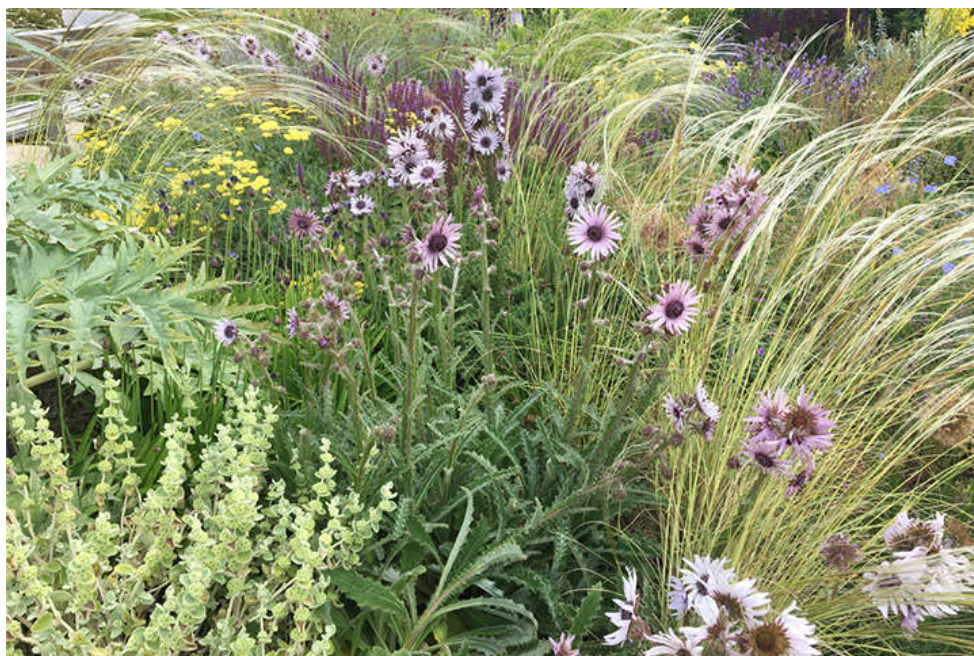
So now I come to the garden Jim Sharpe had originally asked me to talk about. I receive the monthly journal of the RHS and had been reading about a new garden they were creating in the midlands. A very large old estate had been acquired and Tim Stuart-Smith was asked to create a master plan. At present the plantings are mainly centred on the new Welcome Centre and within the walls of the old 11 acre vegetable garden now known as the Weston Walled Garden. This area has been divided into an area dealing with all aspects of vegetable growing and an area now called the Paradise Garden. A Paradise garden is one of the oldest styles of gardening coming from the mideast and even mentioned in the book of Genesis. It usually features an enclosed area, with water features and plants for beauty and fruit. This garden is dominated by a central rill that flows down the length of the area and links two small ponds with fountains and a larger central one with waterlilies. The easternmost area where you enter features plants from the Mediterranean area. It had a lot of grit incorporated into the soil to mimic the impoverished soils of the Mediterranean and comprises a massed planting using a lot of yellow flowered perennials, and at this time of the year tall uprights of Mullein. There are some dot colours of red from *Knautia macedonica*. The idea of an informal meadow dominates and the plants are more mixed up with less emphasis on individuals and more on the over-all effect.





The above shot shows the fountain surrounded by plantings using a lot of grasses as we have come to expect. A multi-stemmed Redbud is used to create a sense of height and I think it has had its lower branches pruned off to lift the crown and allow us to see through to the pool and the plantings beyond. I often find this mixture hard to achieve myself so I was interested to see how the grasses here are mostly low. *Stipa tenuissima* is great for a soft, loose, graceful feel.





I loved this area with that new daisy from South Africa and behind it *Salvia superba*, to the left the soft yellow of the *Yarrow* and below left *Ballota*. Weaving it all together is the *Stipa* with its wispy stems. All very informal and delightfully naturalistic. I find myself wondering about the way areas like this may develop. I tend to keep plants separated in my own garden just so I can keep everything under control. More aggressive plants will inevitably choke out more delicate ones. It's always a battle.



The other end of this large area features plants that prefer a heavier, retentive soil and around the twin fountain are planted pleached *Persia* Ironwoods or *Parottias* and the perennials include Meadow Sweet, Geraniums, and lots of summer blooming Spurges.





Spurges are architectural plants with chartreuse, long lasting florets and are the kind of plant I could do with more of. I was particularly taken with *Euphorbia schilligii*. Here it is paired with a ferny plant, the Milk Parsley or *Selinum* along with a blue perennial Geranium.

This upper part of the Paradise Garden also features clipped tall columns of European Beech. Although they would obviously be a lot of work with the trimming they are important in a new garden as they lend an air of permanence and longevity.





Finally RHS Garden Bridgewater features a lot of large grassy areas where mums can let their kids run around freely. But it isn't just all close cut. There are short grass areas but much of it is left long. This idea is seen quite often in European gardens and it emphasizes a concern for insects and pollinators. The combination of short grass for kids and long grass for wildlife is very appealing.



In conclusion I will suggest planting styles do change over the years. There is still the attempt to present any individual flower to it's best advantage but many newer plantings emphasis a more naturalistic arrangement. Am I influenced by this? Yes, I think so. I believe I will jumble plants up more and let them fall over each other. I do worry the weeds might find it even easier to slip in and become a nuisance but I do appreciate these changes to how we put the plants together. ▣



*Rhododendron carolinianum.*





Meconopsis baileyi, Challenging to grow but worth the effort. [Photos Sterling Levy]

## Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society Board Members and Other Roles

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**Photo Album - A selection of photos for your enjoyment.**



*Cypripedium parviflorum* . [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



*Asplenium tricomane*s. [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



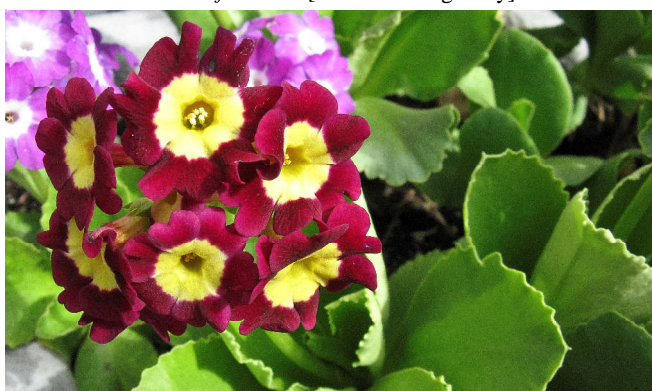
*Trillium cuneatum* . [Photo Roslyn Duffus]



*Linum flavum* . [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi'. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Primula auricula* Hybrid seedling . [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Epimedium rubrum*. [Photo Sterling Levy]



*Kalmia latifolia* 'Nipmuck'. [Photo Sterling Levy]