AtlanticRhodo

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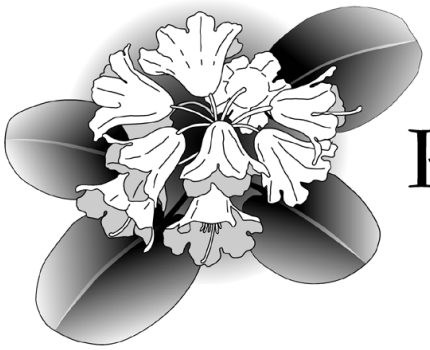

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society

Our Mission

ARHS supports and promotes the development and exchange of expertise and material relating to the practice of creating and maintaining year-round garden landscapes featuring rhododendrons and other plants.

Inside this Issue

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

Membership

Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society.

The current membership period is September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018. The membership fee is $20.00 if paid between September 1, 2018 and November 30, 2018, and $30.00 after Nov. 30, 2018. For benefits see ARHS website **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 $57.00 Canadian. For benefits see **www.rhododendron.org**

Cheques, made payable to Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society should be sent to **Rebecca Lancaster, 22 Walton Dr. Halifax, NS B3N 1E4**

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: *Stewartia pseudocamellia* at its fall peak on Nov. 5, 2018, the Brett garden at Halls Road, Halifax.[Photo John Brett]

Calendar of Events

ARHS meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from September to May, at 7:30 p.m. usually in the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History Auditorium, 1747 Summer St., Halifax, unless otherwise noted. Paid parking is available in the Museum lot. We welcome anyone sharing our interest in plants and gardens.

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Nov 6 **A Garden in the Woods of Maine**, presented by Cassie Banning. Cassie is the Abby Garden and McAlpin Farm Manager at Seal Harbour, Maine. She will focus her talk on the garden design, development, traditions and the future of the historic walled Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden. This property was the summer estate of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

Dec 4 **Christmas party,** Our annual Christmas Party where we share finger food and a maximum of five of our favourite digital photos of our gardens or travel. If you bring your pictures – five maximum! - on a USB flash drive we can view directly from that. The Society takes care of supplying wine & refreshments. See you all there!

2019

Jan 2 **Historic Plant Collection and Wildflower Photographs of William C McCalla,** presented by Peggy and Bob McCalla. Peggy and Bob McCalla came to Nova Scotia in 1975, Bob to take up a position in the Department of Geography at Saint Mary's University and Peggy to serve as its first Map Librarian/ Cartographer. Bob's grandfather, William C. McCalla, was a noted educator, photographer and naturalist in Western Canada. His passion was collecting and photographing wildflowers. In total, he donated over 15,000 pressed flowers to the University of Alberta Herbarium before his death in 1962. He also photographed thousands of wildflowers. The presentation will highlight his work, including both his photos and some of his pressed flowers.

Feb 5 **Selecting for Late Blooming Deciduous Azaleas**, presented by Dr. Ed Reekie. Ed is a retired plant scientist who taught and conducted research at Acadia University from 1985 to 2013. In his presentation, he will discuss his approach to hybridising summer flowering deciduous azaleas for Nova Scotia that he hopes will share the same spectacular floral traits as their spring blooming cousins.

March 5 **The Himalayan Gardens of Western Scotland**, presented by John Brett. John is a long-time ARHS member and our current President. He gardens in Halifax and at Morris Island near Yarmouth. His presentation will take us on a tour of impressive garden landscapes in the west of Scotland. He will focus on the extraordinary plants to be found there, particularly the Asian rhododendrons collected by the great plant hunters of the late 19th and the 20th centuries.

April 1 **A panel discussion with local gardeners** - topic to be announced.

May 7 **Member-to-member plant sale**. NS Museum, project room and auditorium.

Thank you for avoiding the use of perfumes and scented products when you come to ARHS events.

A very warm welcome to our new members who have joined ARHS since May .

Harold Berg	**Rochester, MI**	**Stella Robertson**	**Halifax,NS**
Don Bowen	**Hammonds Plains, NS**	**Heather Roth**	**Halifax,NS**
Diane Chisholm	**Rose Bay, NS**	**Benjamin Sabine**	**Port Williams,NS**
Joseph Cooper	**Halifax, NS**	**Karen Schlick**	**Musquodoboit Harbour, NS**
Denise Coulter	**Halifax, NS**	**Beverley and Gary Scott**	**Halifax,NS**
Hannah Dunleavy	**Seaforth, NS**	**Raymond Smith**	**Dartmouth,NS**
Elizabeth Eve	**Halifax, NS**	**Denise Soper**	**Halifax, NS**
James Henderson	**Hammonds Plains, NS**	**Karen Stadnyk**	**Lower Sackville,NS**
Tracy Jessen	**Winsor Junction, NS**	**Brad Watt**	**Brookside,NS**
John Kitz	**Halifax, NS**	**Ben Westheuser**	**White's Lake,NS**
Nancy Lewis	**Halifax,NS**	**Heather Wildsmith**	**Dartmouth**
Linda MacDonald	**Timberlea,NS**	**Junzeng and Qing Zhang**	**Halifax**
Bev MacPhail	**Middle Sackville,NS**		
Tara Moore	**Shad Bay,NS**		

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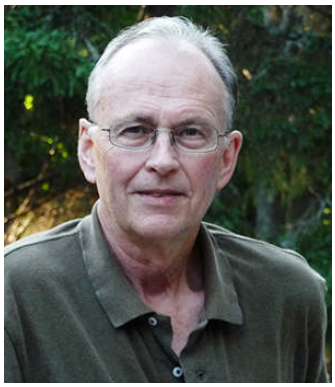
THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thoughts on a Gardening Culture and the Ways, Large and Small, We Create It.

by John Brett



This last October was a very special one for me, and for all the other participants in a memorable tour of gardens in the Seine Maritime region of Normandy, France. Our own Bob Howard, ARHS member extraordinaire, was the organiser on behalf of the Atlantic Association of Landscape Designers, and to him must go much of the credit for the tour's success. Other ARHS members on the tour were Sheila Stevenson, Stephen Archibald, Cora Swinamer, and Jane Rostek. With so many of us, and so many cameras at play, I expect we'll be seeing at least one presentation highlighting these gardens on our speakers' program in the year to come.

I will not go into more detail about the tour, as I know Bob Howard is planning to do just that in an article for the winter issue of Atlantic Rhodo. However, I will take this opportunity to reflect on garden legacies, not just as they apply to the ancient, settled lands of Europe, but as they apply to us, on the north atlantic edge of the new world. I use the word "legacy" here to define a gift or inheritance that is handed on to future generations for their enjoyment and edification.

Thoughts began to form on this topic while walking among the hundred year old rhododendrons and towering oaks of Normandy. It seemed to me that some of the most splendid gardens we visited had evolved in a similar way. Each contained its own unique stories, of course, while at the same time fitting into a general pattern whereby private ownership gave way, over time, to some form of public or community stewardship. The pattern seemed to be this: In the beginning there is a family that owns a significant "manoir" framed by substantial grounds and a substantial garden. At some point, and for various reasons, the public becomes involved in the upkeep, both through state support, and through private support, which takes the form of monetary donations and volunteer labour from the local community. The garden may eventually be incorporated so it even has its own legal identity. All of this leads, inevitably, to a sense of ownership that passes from the private into the public sphere. So a garden that may still be, at least partly, in private hands, becomes a community asset. In Normandy, we experienced two notable though different examples of this kind of evolution: the estate gardens of Les Bois des Moutiers and Le Vasterival.

In North America, we can see a similar pattern. Notable examples are those gardens that were originally attached to grand, private estates. By the time you read this, our November speaker, Cassie Banfield, will have introduced us to one of these. Cassie is the farm manager for the Land and Garden Preserve in Seal Harbour, Maine. She oversees the magnificent walled Abby Garden, originally created by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and celebrated garden designer, Beatrix Farrand.

Closer to home, the Annapolis Royal Historic Garden can be considered another variation. In this case, strong community support, both monetary and through volunteer labour, and different levels of state funding, would likely be more significant than any single large private supporter. Alas, the town did not, to my knowledge, have the Rockefellers, the Cabots, and their ilk summering in the area.

What I'm leading up to here is a question I posed to myself amid the splendours of those Norman gardens: What activities and initiatives are we undertaking that contribute, in the broadest sense, to the further development of beautiful landscapes, urban and rural, public and private, in Atlantic Canada? And how might we continue to do so? By "we" I was thinking not only of you and I, as individuals, but of all of us together as members of the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society. Or to put it another way, "we" refers to all of us who believe strongly in the importance of a vital garden culture, but who don't have a large landed estate to hand down to future generations.

Answering my own question, I was gratified by a mental list of unique ways that the ARHS is creating garden legacies. And now that I am back in Halifax I will expand upon that list by writing it down. So let me count the ways:

As individuals, of course, many of us garden on our own plots in cities, towns, and in the countryside. This in itself is a significant contribution, and though we likely do it for our own private pleasure, the results have a positive influence on the aesthetics of neighbourhoods and districts. The limitation here is that the individual garden often flourishes for only as long as the gardener is alive, healthy, and in residence. When new owners come along they may prefer a four car driveway to beautiful shrubbery. So this kind of garden legacy is often short-lived, the positive effects quickly over-turned.

Fortunately, the ARHS as a collective is involved in more far-reaching initiatives. First and foremost, we continue to exist as a vital, active society with a life that extends beyond that of its members. In one form or another we have been in existence since 1976 – that's over forty years, and a testament to the vision and the effort put forth by many of our older members, some of whom have passed on and are now, we hope, in Elysium, happily planting rhododendrons amidst those

fertile fields. It is also a testament to those current volunteers who are on our board of directors, and others who head up our various committees or just show up when there is work to be done. They carry this special gardening legacy forward, to build on what we have accomplished so far.

What else, in addition to simply existing, are we currently doing to create garden legacies? The ARHS is involved in outreach partnerships with the city of Halifax. These are headed up by Chris Hopgood and his stalwart ARHS crew, who have been maintaining and improving gardens at Regatta Point and Stratford Way Park. Chris and ARHS volunteers have also done similar work on the rhododendron beds at Agriculture and Agri Food Canada's Kentville Experimental Station. This association has led, more recently, to another important ARHS legacy project headed up by Sheila Stevenson. She is in the very final stages of completing a series of three large interpretive panels that will be placed permanently at the Kentville Experimental Station's display gardens. The panels will tell the story of the extensive rhododendron breeding program that once flourished there. All of these initiatives are, to my way of thinking, building a garden legacy.

A completely different way that the ARHS is building a garden legacy is through cash awards to students of horticulture and landscape design at Dalhousie University and NSCC KingsTech. These awards, of $750.00 and $1000.00 respectively, are an encouragement to those future professionals who will have a direct influence on shaping the environments in which we live. Trudy Campbell is our ARHS volunteer overseeing this worthy effort.

In closing off, it's worth noting that all of these garden legacy projects have one thing in common: dedicated volunteers who are making a real contribution both to the ARHS and to the larger community. Volunteers are always needed. Without them, we can accomplish nothing. So please, my fellow members, consider getting in touch with Lynn Rotin, our volunteer coordinator. Her email is lynnrotin@gmail.com, and you can also find her at most of our monthly meetings. Whether it is administration, computer programming, offering expert gardening advice, moving mulch or digging holes, there are many jobs to do. And all for a most worthy cause: a more beautiful and inspiring environment for both present and future generations to enjoy. ¤

Progress Report on the Outreach Garden Projects

by Chris Hopgood

Five of the hardest working ARHS volunteers gathered at the Stratford Way Park on June 1, 2018 to plant three new shrubs and do a whole bunch of weeding. A number of years ago our Society was asked by the Halifax Regional Municipality to establish a garden bed and contribute the plants, and we did. It's a tough micro -climate, windy, dry, and probably near the highest elevation in the HRM, so our favourite plants, rhododendrons, struggle at this location. The other drawback is the lack of a source of water.

The hardworking team of Susan McLean, Patricia Kean, Juan Zhou, Jim Bruce and Chris Hopgood got going at 9:30 sharp. In fact, Jim was there first and was working away without any supervision! Our work party spring project is usually planned for the end of April, but this year we wanted to see what else was growing in that garden, so we gave the plants a chance to show themselves. It was not a pretty sight, weeds abounded, and some of the perennials were taking over, so we went about our work with determination.

By 11:30 we were done, two hours of hard work and the two beds were weeded, some plants relocated, and the three new plants found a new home. I'll tell you what they are at the end of the report, just so you'll keep reading.

Some of the rhodos planted on the site years ago are having a difficult time, because there is not enough moisture and in the winter it is windy, cold and exposed. Thus we moved some of them to more protected, semi-shaded spots. We will see how they make out next spring.

Ok, ok, the three new shrubs we planted were, R. Lemon Dream, a dwarf elepidote that will hopefully survive the tough microclimate, and for the first time at this location we planted two deciduous azaleas, A. Rosy Lights and A. Arneson Gem. It will be quite interesting to see how they cope with the winter conditions. These plants were purchased at Kent Building Supplies and all were on sale, our treasurer will be happy to note! ¤

Update on the Kentville Rhododendron Interpretive Panel Project

by Sheila Stevenson, project manager/writer

Three attractive content-rich panels celebrating the Kentville rhododendron legacy will be installed at two locations at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Station in Kentville, NS, in May 2019. The panels will stay in place year-round.

Each panel is 81cm. X 193cm., fabricated from 6.4mm. aluminum, and mounted on support posts bolted to a concrete pad. Panel design by Grant Murray is 99% complete. We are waiting on some final translation from our Agri-Food Canada partners.

Atlantex will fabricate the panels in March/April 2019 and deliver them to Agri-Food Canada's Kentville station, where the installation of the concrete pads and panels will be done by their staff, headed up by Mike Pulsifer.

The project has required much more design time but less material than estimated. It is still within the approved budget of $13,655.

Driving the Dempster Highway

by Philip MacDougall

The Author at the Arctic Circle.

Richardson Mountains.

(editor's note: For their kind permission to reprint this article, we wish to thank the author and the Rhododendron Species Foundation Yearbook, where it was originally published.)

When Margaret Charlton and Charles Sale suggested we get a group together and botanize the Dempster Highway in the Yukon I agreed. Even though my *Flora of the Yukon Territory* is a 669-page tome, I had low expectations for the plants we would see; I was along for their pleasant company.

I have a subliminal concept of the north shaped in early childhood by the works of the Scottish-Canadian bank-teller and poet, Robert W. Service. His epic tales, charged with a disturbing verve, were rote memorized by young children of my generation in grade school:

> **There are strange things done in the midnight sun**
> **By the men who moil for gold;**
> **The Arctic trails have their secret tales**
> **That would make your blood run cold;**
> **The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,**
> **But the queerest they ever did see**
> **Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge**
> **I cremated Sam McGee**

The Cremation of Sam McGee for six year olds? Really?

June 17, 2008

Four of us arrived at 8:30 pm in the Yukon capital, Whitehorse, having taken a 90-minute flight from Vancouver. We were Charlie Sale, Sylvia Mosterman, Anna Gartshore and myself, meeting with Alan Tracie, Marcie Tracie and Don Martin, who had driven up in their own camper van. Margaret was under the weather and, given our upcoming isolation, had decided not to join us. Sylvia's husband Theo had been left behind to mind the nursery. The majority of us were intractable plant fanatics.

By 10:00 pm, after settling into "The Airport Chalet", we were out the door and into the hills above. At 40 km south of the Arctic circle and at this time of the year, the sun would set only briefly for a few minutes after midnight.

Rhododendron tormentosum

Loiseleuria procumbens.

Though dimming, the light still allowed us to find mats of *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* at the forest edge, intermingled with a few sprigs of one of the two rhododendrons that grow this far north. This was *R. tomentosum.* It is hard to go anywhere in the north without lupines – here it was *Lupinus arcticus.* A couple of alpines were easily identified: *Oxytropis nigrescens* and *Saxifraga bronchialis. Empetrum nigra* was growing in the same situation as the *Vaccinium.* Formerly in its own family Empetreaceae, it was moved into the Ericaceae in a recent revision.

Perhaps the best plant we saw was *Penstemon gormanii*. It was locally common there, but we would leave it behind when we left Whitehorse. Other penstemons would be seen frequently as we travelled. Plant lust briefly satiated, we settled back in our rooms after a brief walk along the banks of the Yukon river.

June 18

Our camper van pickup was at 4:00 pm, giving us time to shop and explore Whitehorse. Sylvia picked up some costume jewelry at the local thrift shop, and then suggested the two of us take a taxi over the Rotary Centennial Bridge to a hillside on the opposite bank of the Yukon River, covered in open forest of poplar and spruce. *Pulsatilla ludoviciana*, once the territorial flower, was in seed among the grasses. A close cousin, *Anemone multifida*, was still in bloom. We came across *Astragalus americanus* and one of the *Atennaria* or Pussy Toes, though with nine species in the area I could not hazard a guess which one. There was *Artemesia frigida* and a pea, possibly *Oxytropis viscida*. A weedy-looking alpine daisy, *Erigeron humilis* grew in disturbed areas near the road, while sheets of yesterday's *Penstemon gormanii* literally blanketed the hills above.

By 5:00 pm we had done the camper inspections. Now for nine days of provisions from the new Superstore in town, though first there was another important task: Charlie and I went to pick up libations. I had always looked askance at the people coming out of the liquor store with a shopping cart of booze, now it was my time to do this walk of shame. Seven people in the middle of nowhere can drink a surprising amount in ten days.

Alan had a cousin who ran a campground in Carmacks, 109 km along the Klondike Highway, our stop for the night.

We took a meal break on the drive along the shores of Lake Labarge, those very waters where poor Sam McGee had been cremated. There were fire pits and picnic tables, so we had hamburgers and roast marshmallows and then walked the shoreline. Craggy rock outcrops perfectly displayed the silver foliage of *Artemisia borealis*, more *Saxifraga cespitosa* and *Potentilla gracilis*, a somewhat variable plant.

Carmacks is a village of around 500 souls and has one of only four gas stations along our route. Allen's cousin had prepared a fairly extensive buffet for us at his home. I was a little overwhelmed by the hospitality. Then there was the job of setting up the campers, followed by a glass of wine and an evening stroll along the Nordenskoid river, its banks clothed with stands of *Rosa acicularis* and *Epilobium angustifolium.*

June 19

Roadwork. There is always roadwork. The traffic controller told us that it might be an hour before our lane opened. Not an inconvenience to us, it was just a good excuse to scramble out of the campers and into the forest. Sadly the call to return to our vehicles was closer to ten minutes, just when I had come across a colony of the diminutive lady slipper, *Cypripedium passerinum*. I expect the general disappointment all of us felt at not having time to see these plants would have been worse had Allen's contacts in Carmacks not already given us directions to the best orchid colonies along our route. We had a couple more forest stops along the Klondike highway, where standouts were *Pyrola grandiflora* and colonies of *Linnaea borealis* and *Cornus canadensis*. We ignored the sign for the Dempster Highway entrance. How could we come here without making a brief detour to the fabled goldrush centre of Dawson City?

After this excursion – most interesting but with no botanical highlights to report - we backtracked 43 km to the Dempster Highway. We gassed up at the highway entrance as there would be no more fuel till Eagle Plains. *Epilobium angustifolium* and *Hedysarum boreale* filled the ditches as we drove along.

Rhododendron lapponica.

Rhododendron lapponica.

Our day finished at the Tombstone Mountain campground 73 km in from the junction of the Yukon and Dempster highways. A couple of flat trails let us walk about in the fading day. *Polygonum bistorta* was attractive enough with its little red pokers; the other notable herb was *Lagopus muta*, the Little Weaselsnout. It had blue spikes and proved to be common in any damp organic patch. *Rhododendron lapponicum* and *Phyllodoce glanduliflora* grew among some of the boulders. There was a parsnip, *Bupleurum americanum* and two members of the Boraginaceae, *Myosotis asiatica* and *Mertensia paniculata.* I had to grin as two angry Arctic Ptarmigan chased me around the tundra – they could not be serious. Then came the broken wing act; I had gotten too near their chick. I could clearly see it sitting motionless on a rock. They were nesting on an open granite shelf among *Betula glandulosa*.

June 20

Charlie Sale and I shared one of the rented campers throughout the trip. There was a warden staffing the interpretive center today, so we chatted with her. She gave us the requisite flyers and suggested several easy trails. We had the morning to hike through the surrounding mountains.

Breathtaking needle-peak mountains could be seen in the distance, but the mountains near the campground had only gentle inclines. An absence of any substantive shrubs let us easily make our way to the peaks without a trail. Each of us carried bear spray, and I also took some comfort in thinking the expansive views might alert us to the presence of a large animal, giving us plenty of warning. Here is the standard joke about watching for bear activity: Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) scat is smaller and contains lots of berries and fur. Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) droppings are larger – look for little bells and the smell of pepper spray.

Tussock grass was the dominant vegetation at the bases of these mountains, and *Anemone narcissiflora* displayed in great clumps here. A surprising plant also tucked in the grass is *Saxifraga oppositifolia*. Previously I had only ever seen it on high, exposed peaks. *Rubus arcticus*, with outsized pink flowers also crept through the swath. The soil thinned as we climbed, and the dominance of grass gave way to more woody material. In places the lovely ericaceous *Cassiope mertensiana* covered the hillsides. Most areas were dominated by rosaceous *Dryas octopetala*, perhaps the most common subshrub in bloom throughout the mountain ranges of this trip. Unlike much Arctic plant material, both the *Cassiope* and the *Dryas* seem to adjust well to peaty, cool garden situations.

There were only 5 *Geum* species in my *Flora*, and I found them hard to distinguish from the *Potentilla* species, of which the Yukon has 23. Apparently, in fruit the style of geums elongates and hooks, distinguishing it from potentillas. In any event I was pretty sure it was *Geum glaciale* dotting the landscape on the lower slopes. Further up was the rather similar *Potentilla uniflora*. One of the many confusing creeping willows was emerging with wooly foliage. My initial guess was *Salix reticulata*, a plant I have sadly failed with on more than one occasion. Up at the ridge line, where it was mostly granite with not too much loose talus, no one species dominated. *Saxifraga oppositifolia* now looked more in place – like flat pink pancakes on bare rock. We all got excited by the first small clumps of that holy grail of alpines, *Eritrichium nanum.* In the coming days we would become jaundiced to the presence of this sky blue gem, but I would continue to hunt for that best-ever clump.

There was a more sheltered aspect as we came off in the lee of the mountain. In spots near the bottom, small groves of waist-high shrubs appeared, the birch was probably *Betula nana*. *Salix lanata* var. *richardsonii* was more easily identified, with a creeping habit at higher elevations, then more upright as we descended. At the bottom was my only sighting of *Kalmia polifolia*. It should have been common, perhaps it was not yet blooming along most of the route. On the other hand *Rhodiola rosea* ssp. *integrifolia* turned out to be quite common. It is an attractive, stalked sedum with red flower heads and a range extending as far south as Nevada. We oohed a little bit at a *Gentiana glauca* with its flowers of a very unusual shade of jade.

Sylvia had brought a set of walkie-talkies so we split them between the vans. One vehicle traveling at botanical speed is bad enough, we would get nowhere with four. We came to an agreement: each van got two stops, 15 minutes each.

Two Moose Lake, at km 104 seemed lazily named, but who am I to judge? There was a viewing platform, but no moose. I got down to admire one of the louseworts, *Pedicularis lanata*. I took lots of snaps of these curiosities – my fascination became an ongoing joke.

A couple of notes:

- Parts of the territory covered by the Ogilvie and Tombstone ranges have never glaciated. There has been an environmental stability here lacking in most of the more southern areas of the continent. This is a key factor in the high species diversity and endemism found along the Dempster Highway.

- The gravel-surfaced Dempster is Canada's most northerly year-round road. With a length of 736 km it pushes far past the Arctic Circle, ending at the town of Inuvik. Plans are to extend it to the Arctic Ocean. It is built on permafrost, a unique challenge. A paved road is a serious heat sink, soon melting the ice beneath. Gradually the road sinks into the land it was built on. The solution is a thick berm of gravel (it is up to 12-feet high along this road), insulating the permafrost below. The immense gravel pits that fed this project are dotted along the highway. Tonight we bunkered down in one we christened "red fox" (*Vulpes vulpes*) after the mangy animal skulking nearby hoping for an opportunistic meal.

June 21

The first day of summer. A few dozen kilometers north is the Arctic Circle, 66 degrees 33 minutes north. The earth has an axial wobble with a 26,000-year periodicity, so the line actually drifts about 30 meters north every year. Today the sun did not set. Our day started with exploration of the gravel pit. The fox was not in evidence. *Dryas drummondii* was under the wheels of our campers. Its yellow flowers never seem open. I had always considered *Dryas octopetala* the only other member of the genus, but my *Flora* separated out five species from *D. octopetala* based on leaf morphology. Hmmm.

Our route north followed the Ogilvie River. I think it was Allen who spotted the flock of thinhorn sheep across the river, *Ovis dalli dalli*. We had faithfully counted the kilometers from the Dempster entrance, and, as promised by Allen's cousin, there was a stand of *Cypripedium guttatum* in shaded shrubbery at the exact distance he had indicated. While not a disappointment, this lady slipper was significantly smaller than I had anticipated. Of the cypripediums occurring in the Yukon, Allen, Marcie and Don would see the much showier *C. calceolus* on their drive back from Whitehorse. We would see *C. passerinum* later, while *C. montanum* occurs only in a few locations on the southern border.

Not far beyond, on a steep rock wall to our right – mounds of blue. I do not recall who gave out the alert, but there it was: *Eritrichium splendens*, endemic and uncommon, putting the *E. nanum* we had been so taken with to shame. It proved difficult to get to, the walls were steep and covered in loose shale. Don and I made the scramble but perching for photos was precarious. We continued driving up the road until a kinder slope opened in the wall. More *Cypripedium guttatum* was at our feet. Each of us patiently waited for our turn to climb to the precipice with its hanging *Eritrichium.*

The Ogilvie Ridge viewing area is located at kilometer 258.8. Somehow, at some stop or other, Charlie had found a fishing rod, so he tried his hand at fly casting for graylings. No luck. A gentleman downriver came up to us, and he had a fine catch. He said he had been at it about an hour.

At kilometer 369.2 is Eagle Plains. This was the only evidence of human habitation we saw on the road. There were two gas pumps and a garage, a corner store and hotel that were all connected. At the side were showers and RV hookups. That was all there was. My day to cook, so I took the easy out, sausages and sauerkraut. Most of us had had a drink or two in the bar by the time Sylvia decided we needed to see the midnight sun on the Arctic Circle itself – a 32-km drive further north, at kilometer 405. Perhaps the stuffed caribou standing by her armchair convinced her. Or perhaps it was the grizzly on the wall behind. She mixed up a bit of

Salix affinity arctica

Druid face paint from berries and makeup. Marcie had abstained so we had our designated driver. We all looked a bit silly, but I guess that was the point. Ann was the only one to put on mosquito netting. The little vampires took full advantage of the dusk and the rest of us were swarmed. I have never celebrated the vernal equinox in a more appropriate way.

June 22

We arrived back at the Arctic Circle (km 405.6) – this time in fine form. With the sun higher in the sky the bloodsuckers of the night before had retired, making the stop immensely more pleasant. A small mat of *Diapensia lapponica (*syn. *D. obovata)* was our only sighting of this woody relative of the Shortias. It was growing in gravel on a roadside pullout. Much of today we drove through low-rolling, granitic fields. Charlie modeled some reindeer horns he had picked up. Lichen is a food staple for the herds that migrate through this area and thick mats of it covered the ground. Each hill had a different composite mix of dominant plants. One had *Rhododendron tomentosum* and *Pedicularis capitata*, another *Parrya nudicaulis* and one of those variable potentillas that were so determined to drive me mad.

Crevice gardens were just starting to be the rage among alpinists at the time of our trip. The Montreal Botanic had recently done a major installation. But any of these installations were just pale imitations of the vertical slate outcrops here. *Crepsis nana* occupied nooks, along with a white *Draba*, another difficult group with 40 species in the area. *Papaver macounii* was a golden shower in this setting, very similar to the little yellow Iceland poppy. *Boykinia richardsonii* is a restricted *Saxifraga* relative; it occupied mossy nooks with *Tofieldia coccinea*. I was identifying the little *T. coccinea* lily by its habitat, since its very similar relative *T. pusilla* typically grows in wet areas. The flat pancakes of *Phlox alaskensis* were everywhere, often dominant. This was one of the loveliest plants on the trip, variable in color from whites through purples and bicolors. Lines of this *Phlox* ran down one hillside of loose slate, following runnels from snow melt. Perhaps the shallow depressions gave them shelter, or maybe the seed followed drainage patterns. A clump of yellow *Chrysanthemum* with crenate basal leaves did not correspond to anything in my *Flora*, and a mystery it remains still. Finally, late in the day, *Corydalis pauciflora*, looking not so different from the blue *Corydalis* species from China that I keep killing.

June 23

Our highest altitudes along the Dempster had been near the highway entrance while passing through the Richardson mountains, at about 1,000 meters. Since then the highway had been on a slow, intermittent descent. We reached the border between the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and at Wright Pass we dipped to 250 meters. Long stretches of tundra had been scrimmaging with the tree line since we had entered the Dempster, but in fact we were nowhere near the actual tree line. Its most northerly intrusions – the most northerly on the planet - are much further north, near Inuvik. Tonight we were to end up in Fort McPherson. To get there we needed to take a rope-pulled ferry that crosses the Peel River during the summer. After crossing the river we descended into the Mackenzie River delta. There was an interpretive boardwalk near where the Ogilvie Mountains opened onto the flat.

Clouds of mosquitoes and black flies rose with the heat – my imagination painted the distant horizon grey with biting insects. In the summer blackfly swarms can actually kill animals. It is estimated the average blood loss for a caribou over a season is three and a half gallons. Canadians even have a song in their honor, called simply enough “The Blackfly Song”. We had hoped to be early enough to avoid the worst of this scourge (they are one of the main impediments to human activity in the north), but summer was advancing in the lowland warmth. Looking north over the boreal forest of swamp alder, birch and drunken spruce it was an easy collective decision to turn back to the flora of the mountains.

Making our way to the delta had involved several stops on low, rolling hills whose surfaces were loose slate. One hill was virtually covered with *Rhododendron tomentosum*, adpressed to the ground surface to be out of the wind.

Eritrichium elegans.

Ogilvie Mountain Flowers.

Papaver mcconnellii.

Phlox alaskensis.

Another was covered in yellow daisies, an *Arnica* species, perhaps *A. angustifolia*. These became some of my favorite plants, a genus of 11 species that remind me of the Asian *Cremanthodium*. The most charming we came across was *Arnica lessingii*. It seemed the most demure of the bunch, with solitary nodding flowers, a bit more campanulate in shape than most asters. The *Dryas octopetala* underneath the arnicas already carried feathery seed heads. Most of these hills had somewhat complex groupings of flowering plants, looking barren from afar but underfoot a riot of wildflowers. In the valley basins was *Eriophorum scheuchzeri*. One of the seven species in this genus of sedge grasses here, the cotton-ball flower heads were creating stands so thick it looked like we were driving past snowfields.

We had no sooner turned back to the south than pink ditches impinged on my consciousness. I am not sure why we had not noticed them when traveling north. We stopped, jaws dropped, mouths agape. The ditches and hills were covered by the alpine azalea, *Loiseleuria procumbens*.

June 24.

We spent a second night at the same "red fox" gravel pit. After deciding to separate today, some of our group explored on the drive back to Eagle Ridge, but I joined Sylvia, Charlie and Allen and backtracked to the *Loiseleuria*. We felt our time poking about there yesterday had been too brief. At the site, north and on our left, low hills of fractured rock were draped with vegetation composed of three prostrate ericaceous shrubs, the notable *Loiseleuria* was dominant. *Cassiope tetragona* figured prominently, easily distinguishable from *Cassiope mertensiana* only by a deep ridge down each leaf. *Andromeda polifolia* filled many moist cracks. Something which either was, or resembled, *Salix arctica* would have been walked past save for the protruding bright red seed clusters. Clumps of *Anemone narcissiflora* completed the scene. To our right was a boggy plain cut with streams. *Dodecatheon frigidum* was dotted about, colors ranged from the typical purple to the palest violet. I had not seen this pale color in the shooting stars before. There was a bit of the marsh violet, *Viola epipsila*. Snow melt had been more recent here. While it was already seeding further up, here the *Salix arctica* was in full bloom, with red catkins even more prominent than the seed heads. *Petasites frigidus* was emerging in the meadows, but the nicest plant was a buttercup. Perhaps it was the setting. *Ranunculus nivalis* was flowering streamside, with melting snowbanks two feet away.

Now we too turned south to Eagle Ridge. Sylvia had us stop at a hillside of *Spiraea beauverdiana*, again interested in any shrub that would tolerate the long nights at -50° C (-58° F). Stands of more upright *Rhododendron tomentosum* grew in its shelter. A boreal owl, *Aegolius funereus*, watched us suspiciously for a while before flying off. We had a final stop for more sheets of pink, this time *Vaccinium microcarpum*, common name "the small cranberry", a denizen of peat bogs through much of the northern hemisphere.

Our groups rejoined at yet another gravel pit for more easy hiking. Now off the bogs we had the rock cranberry – also called lingonberry if you go to Ikea – *Vaccinium vitis-idaea.* It was in flower, and last year's rotten fruits were also still attached. Bits of *Arctostaphylos alpina* grew through it. This prostrate shrub, the alpine bearberry, turns a scarlet red in the fall, a prominent component of the autumn color here. *Potentilla fruticosa* ssp. *floribunda* was in full bloom.

Then another evening spent at the Eagle Plains bar staring down the stuffed animals. The waitress is an émigré from eastern Europe. She has worked there nearly three decades. Time and again we found people that lived here not out of necessity but because they could not imagine living anywhere else.

June 25

Sylvia was looking at willows again. I am pretty sure she did it every day. Truth to tell so did I. I am enamored of all of the little creeping arctic willows. Unfortunately they are for the most part recalcitrant in cultivation. *Salix hylematica* is a tiny creeper that does well enough without much intervention, and the Japanese *Salix nakamurana* var. *yezo-alpina* is a larger robust creeper covered in silver fur in the spring. There are a few more worth trying. But today's *Salix* was brilliant, with enormous pink catkins. Not to be attempted at home. My *Flora* described them as a

Anemnoe drummondii.

"taxonomically difficult genus represented in the Yukon by some 34 species". Fifty species is another number thrown around. To my mind this translates as lonely botanists trapped in their cabins during the long arctic winter with nothing to do but split taxonomic hairs.

Today was not particularly rewarding for grand sweeps of wildflowers. But a ditch full of *Pedicularis elegans* was not bad. We had a leisurely drive back to the gravel pit we had stayed at on the 20th. Much of the drive cut though boreal spruce forest and swampy tundra. The spruce all tilted at odd angles since they sat above the permafrost, unable to fix roots on anything. Margaret calls them drunken spruce. *Polemonium pulcherrimum* , growing in the gravel along much of the road, warranted a stop for photos. This, the Showy Jacobs Ladder, often grew in long drifts. A roadside pullout with mountain vistas had clumps of *Arnica angustifolia* ssp. *alpina* in the roadside dirt.

So the day wasn't a total loss. We saw isolated examples of several notable plants. These included insectivorous *Pinguicula vulgaris*, (common bladderwort) and on a stop (again for those stands of *Cypripedium passerinum* and *C. guttatum*) there was another orchid, *Listeria borealis*. One hill had just a few of both *Campanula uniflora* and *Primula cuneifolia*, our only sightings. A *Llyodia serotina* was flowering under a shaded crevice – these arctic habitats do not seem to favor bulbous plants. My favorite of the day was another aster, utterly charming *Chrysanthemum integrifolium.*

The gravel pit was its own reward. The parking area was colonized with one-foot, white, loose domes of *Minuartia elegans.* Of course, I had to take more pictures of *Pedicularis labradorica*. It was the weediest-looking of the louseworts here. And a bit of *Saxifraga tricuspidata.* There are 22 species of *Saxifraga* in the Yukon; we had hardly touched them.

June 26

I took the limestone hill at a run. An hour before we had split up at this stop. Allen, Paul, Don and myself had taken the higher hills, Charlie, Marcy, Sharron, Anna and Sylvia stayed lower. It allowed us to cover more territory. The daily thunderstorm rolling in from the south had forced us to converge back at the vehicles. They had come across *Smelowskia borealis*, an endemic occurring only on the unglaciated mountains of the area. It is a densely felted grey monocarpic mustard. Charlie pointed to its general location, but I had no desire to be the tallest object on these hills when the storm arrived. Nevertheless, I found it after a short, mad scramble, but it was well past peak bloom. It had collapsed into a straggly purple-tipped mop from what would have been a dramatic, football-sized, purple ball.

We had stopped here because of the distinct hills, almost-white limestone screes with little vegetation on their flanks. Near the top I had come across a white alpine poppy, *Papaver walpolei*, yet another occasionally seen endemic. The best clumps of *Parrya nudicaulis* on our trip were here, as well as a third Brassicaceae, *Lesquerella arctica*.

It turned into one of our best plant days. As we drove we bagged nice clumps of *Castilleja hyperborea* followed by *Aconitum delphinifolium.* The first is a robust yellow Indian Paintbrush, the latter a tiny alpine monkshood. There was lots of *Androsace chamaejasme*, a sweet little alpine. The centers of the pure white flowers turn pink as soon as they are pollinated, an arrangement that probably benefits both pollinator and pollinizer. Somehow I feel the second word should be pollinatee. There were small plants of *Rhododendron lapponicum*, tolerant of lime, and the commonly named Yellow Saxifrage, *S. aizoides*. Our night was spent at the Tombstone campground.

Pedicularis lanata.

June 27

Life is tough. *Gentiana algida* knows this. Alan Tracey had obviously been expecting to encounter this widely distributed little beauty since he let out a small victory call on finding some in a moist depression near a stand of *Salix lanata* var. *richardsonii*. These forms are speckled white and blue. In Colorado they are known as the white gentian while on Baimashan in China they are nearer blue. They do not self -pollinate, and here even the amount of energy put into pollen production can make the difference between success and failure. The daily thunderstorms can wash away this precious pollen resource. The gentians' adaption is an ability to change internal cellular pressure, allowing the flowers to close shop in a matter of four or five minutes after any sudden temperature drop. Not quite a Triffid but still and all another example of the little wonders in biological systems.

More hiking in the Tombstone mountains. The speed with which the hillsides have changed in a week is in keeping with 24 hours of daily sunlight. The seasonal cycle of growth is very compressed here. Paul got excited about some *Saxifraga flagellaris.* Damn, we had missed *Anemone drummondii* on our first swing through, now only a few scattered flowers were left – a lovely lavender with black anthers. Perhaps in recompense another hill had mats of yellow *Anemone richardsonii* at peak.

The primulas themselves may have been disappointing but another member of the family was making no bones about being the toughest plant around. Small clumps of *Douglasia arctica* were flowering in granite crevices only at the very peaks of each low mountain we summited. Pink and caespitose buns. Very nice.Three of the four species found here are endemic.

I was driving today, Anne had joined me after Tombstone while Charlie socialized with Sylvia. We had the usual conversations one should have on road trips: family, education, job, big things in our lives, and small.

The price of gasoline had soared during the summer and we had played fuel roulette with our rented campers. The gas tanks were near empty when rented, and we could return them as empty as desired. Good luck. Exiting the Dempster we ran in to strong headwinds and fuel consumption soared. During our trip I had mistaken fastidiousness from Anne as nervousness. As the gas gauge plunged toward zero an internal panic began, as much for what Anne's reaction would be as for being stranded. I slowed to conserve fuel. The empty light went on 50 km from the Carmacks gas station, it was time to fess up. She took the news with aplomb, offering assurance rather than panic. We coasted on what I assumed were fumes. At 10 km out relief flooded in, now I could easily hike to help. Charlie and Sylvia were filling up when we finally did reach the gas pumps. Theirs was the same story, we had both been thinking the other could rescue us if we went dry.

Saxifraga oppositifolia.

June 28

It had been everything a road trip should be. Allen, Marcie and Don were starting their drive back to Vancouver later that day. We had driven from Carmacks and dropped off the campers, stopping for a picture of *Oxytropis splendens* flowering along the roadside ditches; little else was intermingled with it. O. Splendens has the common name, "Showy Locoweed" or "Showy Crazyweed"; it belongs to a group of peas that produce the alkaloid *swainsonine*. This poison accumulates slowly in livestock. A classic symptom of locoweed toxicity is erratic behavior and odd body motions. Humans are rarely severely poisoned. If it occurs it is typically from eating toxin-containing meat. The plant, however, was a pretty thing growing along the road.

The botanical delights continued right till the end. A stroll by the airport revealed another big bank of *Rosa acicularis*; *Penstemon gormanii* was still going full tilt, and a sand lot had big clumps of *Chenopodium capitatum* and *Aster alpinus*. The *Chenopodium* was especially pretty – a coarse looking plant but with bright-red fruiting clusters along the full length of the stem.

So now our trip was over, and it was goodbye to the childhood trauma induced by Robert Service and his dark poems of the gold rush. My impression of Canada's far north was forever changed, and for the better. ¤

In Praise of Self-Seeders

by Nina Newington

Poppies in chard.

In August I count on Queen Anne's Lace. I've learned from Beverly McClare at Tangled Garden to dead-head it as devotedly as any $15 perennial. The greenish white parasols tilted this way and that freshen the scene, contrasting with spikes of persicaria and veronicastrum, lightening clots of phlox.

Daucus carota can and does populate whole fields, including our front pasture where it makes an attractive foil to a small flock of sheep. In the garden it prefers edges. In keeping with most self-sowing biennials as well as many annuals, its ecological niche is disturbed soil. Its job is to find open ground and make enough babies to fill it. The ecological name for these short-lived plants that set a lot of seed is ruderals. Good pollination is essential so most are real bee magnets. In temperate regions ruderals evolved to take advantage of the disturbance created by large herds of migrating herbivores. These days the disturber is more likely to be a backhoe than a bison or, in gardens, a person with a spade.

So it is that in new gardens, or newly planted areas, it is easy to grow biennials such as foxgloves, teasels and mulleins as well as annuals like poppies and calendula. They add lightness and charm for a year or two then, as the perennials and shrubs fill in, they fade away, particularly if the soil is mulched.

On the wilder edge of horticulture (where my garden lives), mulch is a spotty affair and the occasional yanking of weeds leaves plenty of room for self-seeders, desirable and otherwise. This hot summer I have been particularly pleased with *Verbascum chaixii* with its 3-4' spikes in yellow or white, each floret with a maroon center. The yellow form planted itself next to a *Clematis tangutica.* The latter scrambles through an 'Arnold Promise' witch-hazel, dangling bells of pale yellow, each with a maroon center of its own. Numerous silver seed heads froth up the scene. The combination has looked charming and fresh for the whole of August and will go on looking good thanks to a volunteer *Symphyotrichum cordifolium (*formerly *Aster cordifolia*), the first lavender flowers opening in time for September.

Earlier in the season foxgloves offered similar enlivening verticals. *Digitalis lutea* is that useful pale greenish yellow that works everywhere. Hummingbirds love the dainty florets. It seems considerably more perennial than most, though again mainly along the paths. *Digitalis* 'Sutton's Apricot' and 'Apricot Surprise' are forms of the biennial *D. purpurea.* These held pride of place in a bed I used to grow garlic in, joined by the perennial and delightful *Geum* rivale 'Leonard's Variety'; *Potentilla nepalensis* 'Miss Wilmott' and a David Austin rose, 'Benjamin Britten'. Oh, and about a thousand coral *Papaver somniferum,* some single, some double.

I spent a lot of time in July admiring this scene (and avoiding doing anything that would break a sweat.) 'Benjamin Britten' is an odd orangey-pinkish red, perfectly toned to the corals and peaches of the rest. Off to one side was 'The Generous Gardener', a spectacularly good blush pink David Austin rose. In the distance, where the Brussels sprouts begin, was a fine stand of ox-eye daisies and, beyond these, glimpsed through a gap in the asparagus, the red red of corn poppies.

It will never be quite so perfect again, this scene, so it was essential to stand and gaze. More was revealed: how perfectly borage had placed itself around 'The Generous Gardener', and how the spiny dark maroon seed heads of chervil added just the necessary sombre note. Self-seeded chervil, by the way, gives us the first fresh herb every spring.

The scene was not quite so artless as I make it sound since I had removed nine out of ten poppies and ruthlessly excised every yellow flowered weed. Editing is essential to gardening with ruderals.

Also, it helped if you stood by the outhouse from which viewpoint the orange calendula weren't too visible. From a vantage point closer to the drive the scene looked a lot more like the clichéd 'riot of colour'. Fireweed, also self-sown, provided a mauve backdrop to coral and orange and blue. It was fun anyway.

As ever, it is essential to match vigour with vigour. A rock garden of diminutive alpines is not the place for giant mulleins, though perhaps a few columbines might be acceptable, discreetly placed. Many beloved and undemanding-once-established perennials belong to a very different ecological group than the ruderals: the stress tolerators. Their strategy is to dig in and stay put. They tolerate stress of one kind or another because it reduces competition. Drought, for example, in the case of peonies and eryngium.

But then along comes the well-meaning gardener, hose in hand, inadvertently creating exactly the conditions that will favour vigorous competition, including from the unruly horde of ruderals. These the gardener has to fight because the one thing most stress tolerators won't tolerate is being leaned on by other plants.

In the few areas of dry soil in my garden I plant stress tolerators such as lavender and perovskia and water very little. The only self-sowers I accept (in theory) are *Nigella damascena* -- love in a mist – which stays low, and *Verbena bonariensis* which grows tall and stick thin, both sparsely leafed.

'In theory' because I have a weakness for poppies and a shameful list of resulting casualties. *Papaver rhoeas* – the corn poppy – and its kin are not so bad, but *Papaver somniferum* in all its glorious forms, from white to grape, single to double, simple to frilly, can dispatch a gas plant (*Dictamnus albus*) in a season.

Fortunately, *Papaver somniferum* is particularly partial to a well-dug, well-manured veg garden. And why not? Why not a row of poppies behind great clumps of ruby stalked chard? How much chard can a person eat anyway? My eyes devour the beauty of the poppies and hold them through the long grey winter. And besides, you can eat the seeds. Once the sculptural pods have turned brown and the little vents under the cap have opened, upend them in a paper bag. I'm always awed by the sheer quantity of seeds one plant produces. Awed but not surprised.

Here's a good book about this topic: Cultivating Chaos: How to Enrich Landscapes with Self-Seeding Plants, Jonas Reif, Christian Kress and Jürgen Becker, 2015, Timber Press. ¤

Verbascum with clematis seed heads

Hydrangeas: Summer's Delight - the 2018 Steele Lecture by Maurice Foster

By Bob Howard **All photos by Maurice Foster unless otherwise noted**

Elegant and crisp, with beautiful images, Maurice Foster's September presentation to our society offered many suggestions for hydrangeas, old and new, to try in Nova Scotia. His title picture showing a splendid summer arrangement of white, blue and pink lacecaps set out on a white table cloth alongside a floppy summer hat. What followed was a selected outline of the genus, with the subsections of closely related species grouped together. My summary of Maurice's presentation will follow his outline, and will include comments from me about my experiences growing some of these plants.

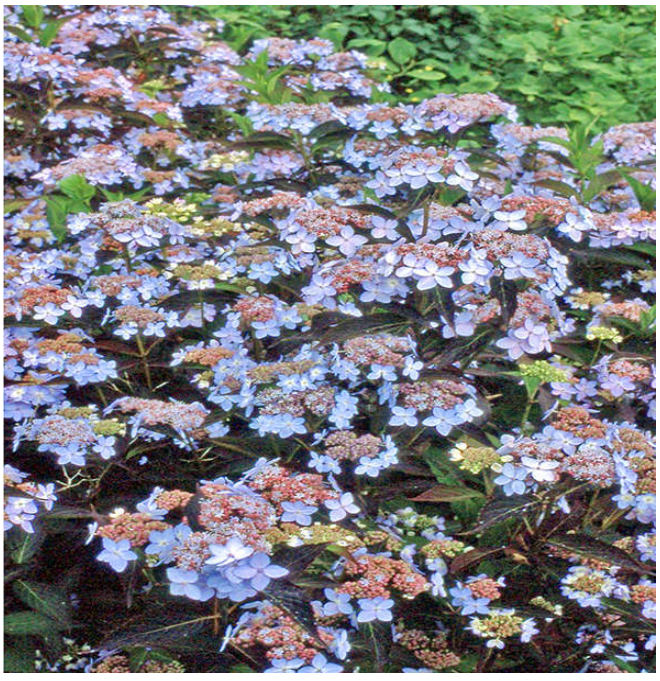
GENUS HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea* & *Cornidia*): principal subsections of section *Hydrangea*

- **Americanae:** arborescens, quercifolia, cinerea
- **Asperae:** aspera, involucrata, longipes, sikokiana
- **Heteromallae:** heteromalla, paniculata
- **Macrophyllae:** macrophylla, serrata
- **Petalanthae:** angustipetala, scandens, chinensis, hirta, lobbii, luteovenosa
- **Calyptranthae:** anomola

First, the subsection *Americanae* contains hardy species from the eastern and southern US, which all grow well in Nova Scotia. The species *H. arborescens* ("smooth hydrangea") contains the well-known variety 'Annabelle'. The goal of breeders is to produce a better pink-flowered form, with 'Invincibelle' introduced several years ago to fill that need. The subspecies *H. arborescens ssp radiata* has a white, downy under-leaf. I'm enthusiastic about this variety, as well as lacecap forms of straight arborescens. Having a fully hardy lacecap would be a good addition to our plant palette and a potential parent for future breeding. *H. quercifolia* (the "oakleaf hydrangea") becomes a large plant with colorful fall foliage. *H. cinerea* is closely related to *H. arborescens* and is not available.

The subsection *Hetermallae* is very promising for us. The first species listed there, *H. heteromalla,* is perfectly hardy for me, with no tip die-back at all. The difficulty is getting good forms. It's just not in the trade. The one plant I have is a seed-

Hydranges serrata seedling selected by Maurice Foster



Hydrangea Serrata 'Tiara' grown by Michael Hayward-Booth

Hydrangea aspera seedling selected by Maurice Foster

Hydrangea serrata seedling selected by Maurice Foster.

raised plant from a friend. The other species discussed, *H. paniculata*, is also very hardy, to zone 3. Maurice showed a picture illustrating a broad range of forms and flower colours being trialed at Wisley. In nature, these are large, spreading shrubs or small trees. Dwarf forms are now available. The old reliable variety is called 'PeeGee' hydrangea, with the "Pee Gee" being a phonetic rendering of the first letters of the botanical name, *paniculata grandiflora*. Traditionally, 'PeeGee' hydrangea types are white, but now their descendants vary in flower colour from 'Vanille Fraise' to 'Quick Fire'.

The subsection *Asperae* has a huge distribution range from Nepal to Japan to Java. They are mountain plants. The hardy species are from China and Nepal. The big surprise in this group for me is the species *H. aspera*. Botanists lump several subspecies here. Others divide this group into different species. Maurice Foster has bred several outstanding varieties of aspera, including 'Hot Chocolate' and 'Rosemary Foster'. I have several plants of *H. aspera Villosa Group* (sorry, there's no agreed-on easy name), one of which we've planted in the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens (ARHG) . They have been flowering well for three years now, in spite of difficult winter weather. The villosas flower late, in September and October for me. The hardiest form in this species I'm aware of is *H. aspera ssp Sargentiana*. It's tropical-looking and big. I think the flowers are less beautiful, while the foliage and character of the plant are less elegant that the villosas. It is tough though, and has been growing at the ARHG for over thirty years, flowering reliably. Admittedly, the western end of Nova Scotia has milder winters that most of the province, and gardens close to the water have more moderate spring temperature fluctuations.

Of the three other species considered in this subsection, *H. longipes* is listed as hardy to zone 5, but I've never seen it available and I know very little about it. *H. sikokiana* is of doubtful hardiness here. I am testing two plants of *H. involucrata.* There are some beautiful forms for this species. Typically growing to one metre or so, they are a good size for modern smaller gardens. They've grown well this summer and fall. This will be, however, their first winter. Will it be their last?

Before going on to the *Macrophylla* subsection, I'm going to briefly mention the last two subsections on the outline we are reviewing. First, six species are mentioned in the subsection *Petalanthe*. I think these are of doubtful hardiness for us and in any case are just not available as far as I know. Second, the subsection *Calyptranthe* features one species, *H. anomala*. Fully hardy, we know this as the 'climbing hydrangea', which may start slowly but eventually will cover fences, pergolas and whole walls of houses, becoming massive on large, old college buildings, flowering more and more as it ages, with showy flowers and seed-heads.

The fourth subsection covered in Maurice's outline is *Macrophylla*, with two species featured. First, the type species, *H. macrophylla*, represents the famous hydrangeas, the ones available almost year-round in the grocery store for holidays. They are often called the "mopheads", with large, rounded clusters of florets. But many are unreliable bloomers for us, because our growing season is too short. Fall and spring frosts frequently kill the growing tips. On Maurice Foster's list, 'Preziosa' is probably the most reliable to flower for us.

Interestingly, 'Preziosa' is sometimes considered to be a hybrid out of macrophylla x serrata. The second species in the subsection is called *H.* serrata (the "mountain hydrangea"). This species occurs mainly in Japan and Korea. It is the serratas I am particularly fond of, and am eager to discover varieties that will be successful in Nova Scotia. Maurice Foster is an expert in *H. serrata* (the "mountain hydrangeas") and encouraged us to grow and test this group of hydrangeas. His sublime

Hydrangea serrata showing a diversity of flower forms.

garden in Kent, England, features an astounding array of these Japanese beauties. He has been doing a lot of breeding and selecting of serrata plants, and showed us examples of fifteen different seed-grown serratas from his garden. There was also a photo of the serrata 'Tiara', named by Maurice for a plant raised by Michael Haywood-Booth. Maurice worked in the Haywood-Booth nursery in the 1950's. 'Tiara' and 'Miranda', another Haywood-Booth plant--which I got through the ARHS plant sale—are both flowering every year for me.

Maurice showed us forty eight different serrata hydrangeas, an extensive range of choices. A couple of photos illustrated the placement of serrata hydrangeas in his garden. At the end of his talk, there were many enthusiastic questions, a good gauge of audience appreciation. The number one question was: "Where can I get some?" One answer is Briar Patch Nursery in Berwick. Another is our spring members' advance sale. ¤

A red *hydrangea serrata* compliments this garden vista at Maurice Foster's White House Farm in Kent, England. [Photo BobHoward]

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Library:	Bonie Conrad	902-463-7582
Coordinator, Seed Exchange:	Sharon Bryson	902-863-6307
Coordinator, Tissue Culture Plant Sale :	Dennis Crouse	902-826-7165
Coordinators, Members' Pre-ordered Sale:	Lynn Rotin & Sophie Bieger	902-346-2018 /902-422-3817
Tech Support at Meetings:	Ruth Jackson	902-454-4681
Gardens Care Outreach:	Chris Hopgood	902-479-0811
Administrator, Passionate Plants Person Awards:	Trudy Campbell	902-835 9389
Spring Garden Tour and 'Potluck	Lynn Rotin & Sophie Bieger	902-346-2018/902-422-3817
District 12 ARS Rep (American Rhodo Society):	John Brett	902-999-3292

Photo Album by Philip MacDougall Alpine Beauties along the Dempster Highway.

Cassiope mertensiana.

Rhododendron lapponicum.

Polemonium boreale.

Parrya nudicaulis.

Papaver walpolei.

Cypripedium calceolus var. parviflorum. [Allen Tracey]

Penstemon gormanii.

Dryas octopetala.