



The Mason-Dixon LINE

*Newsletter of the Mason Dixon Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society*

July-September 2011

Chairman's Letter

[A note from your editor: Dick wrote this letter in early June, hence the comments about rain are before the recent dry weather.]

We've had a great spring here in Jarrettsville. Loads of flowers all over the place. The deer and rabbits did miss a lot of them! It has been cool enough to work in the garden and really enjoy the time. We did get some excessive rain for a few weeks and even had 5.5 inches in 12 hours. This caused some erosion that I didn't expect. I'm sure we'll appreciate the extra ground water later this summer and maybe my pond will continue to overflow all season.

I started planting my new tufa wall several weeks ago and the plants seem to be doing well. Many of the plants are from the NARGS seed exchange and the local chapter plant sales: Arisaema, Gentians, Hypoxis, Allium, Jeffersonia and Saxifrage to name just a few. I also went to the Great Lakes joint meeting several years ago and got some rock garden plants not generally seen in our area. I hope they plan to do that again or someone else in the East puts one together. It's like a mini national meeting.

I was approached by a local garden club to see if they could visit my garden. I didn't think there was enough to keep

them interested but agreed to the visit. We had several rain out dates but they finally came out and seemed to have a good time. I shared quite a few plants with them and they do plan to come back next year. I may have gotten a few to consider attending our local NARGS meeting, and the spring plant sale.

My raised seed benches seem to be just ok and there are sprouts in quite a few of the pots. Most of the seeds are from the exchange and are new to me so I don't recognize a weed in the early stage of development. I do plan to transfer some of the taller seedlings to larger pots next week.

Asian bittersweet got started on my property and I didn't pay proper attention as to how big it was getting. I had hundreds of seedlings in every area of my gardens. I killed the parent plants and have been pulling the seedlings every day. I have taken care of a lot of the problem but still need to keep after the remaining plants! This will be a battle for some time to come. At least there won't be many new seedlings this year.

Have a great summer enjoying your garden and I encourage you to visit other gardens in the area.

Dick Arnold

Special Visits to Special Gardens

By Susan Stiles

It's been a garden-ful spring season, thanks to Joan King, Expedition Master, who planned lots of garden outings for club members to enjoy. After visits to the public gardens of Mt. Cuba Center and Longwood – including a behind-the-scenes peek escorted by intern Sarah Helm – we were given the opportunity to see the very special private gardens of chapter members Linda Barker of Boring, MD, and Pam White and John Lowery of Glyndon, MD. Saturday, May 7 was a perfect spring day and the gardeners' devotion, inspiration, hard work and horticultural know-how showed beautifully.

Linda's garden is a narrow yet quite deep space around a hundred-year-old house. Linda provided photos of the "before" scene which, to put it kindly, was an "ungarden." Now, some 19 years later, it looks like a series of postcards from a gardening magazine. She divided the space into sections, created angled pathways and focal points, and planted it with all four seasons in mind. This is a well-tended garden to discover little by little. As you walk down the pretty paths, it keeps unfolding, room by room, always another delightful scene and well-equipped with places to sit and enjoy. "Blooms begin with snowdrops and witch hazel in mid-February and extend to late November's asters," she says. "The garden is a part of Maryland's 'Wild Acres', so the emphasis is on flowers, fruit, seed and shelter plants for birds and other wildlings and of course pesticide free." A place to observe and appreciate nature, you know this is something Linda takes time to do when she tells you about listening for the unique sound of the ginkgo leaves falling in autumn.

The second garden was at the home of chapter members Pam White and John Lowery, near Reisterstown. This woodsy hillside and unexpected front yard is a garden created, as Pam says, by "spending a lot of energy creating a garden to look like we hardly spend any time at all." The front yard is a beautiful, rocky dry creek bed with plantings aimed towards mostly natives that are deer-resistant, and it really shows the gardeners' love of stone ("some may call it an addiction," Pam says). The back yard is divided between comfortable grassy areas with stone retaining walls, and a large, sloping hillside, filled with tall, mature trees and wide paths that criss-cross through shrubs, ferns, and mayapples. Linda and John have created many unique features, including a stone labyrinth, a pond, a Mediterranean gravel patio, and several seating areas in a garden that is purposefully thoughtful about meeting the challenges of grazing deer. The plant collection is diverse and colorful, creating an environment that is a pleasure to enjoy.

Our thanks and appreciation go to Linda, Pam and John for their generous hospitality in sharing their gardens with us. If you would like to open your garden, or if you have suggestions for other garden visits, please let Joan King know.

Gardening for a Lifetime

By Marika Sniscak

I just finished reading a book by this title, written by Sydney Eddison. She is an award-winning gardener, writer and lecturer whose garden in Newtown, CT has been her life's pleasure for 50 years. With the death of her husband a few years ago and her own diminished vigor, she has had to reevaluate the amount of work it takes to maintain a large garden. As she says, "it took a great deal of time and energy to make the garden as hard to manage as it ultimately became, and I loved every minute of it."

I picked up the book because I had enjoyed the garden articles she wrote for magazines, and her presentations at plant seminars I attended. She does not write much about specific plants, she is more likely to talk about what works and what doesn't, based on her own garden. She is unique in bringing in the advice and experience of fellow gardeners she knew for decades, including rock gardening legends like Linc and Timmy Foster, Geoffrey Charlesworth and Harold Epstein. Connecticut was, and is, a good place to garden.

I was also interested because I want to simplify my own garden. I have my own ideas and timetable, but I am also looking for insight and encouragement from others who have done it. The book has helped in that regard, and I will write about my progress as it happens. In the meantime, it reminded me of an article that Nick Klise wrote for the Winter 2002 issue of the newsletter. It is a good read, and I was surprised that it is actually more timely reading in the summer, as we are dragging around hoses because of another prolonged dry spell. This is a good time to think about simplicity. Nick's article is reprinted on the following pages.

One of the gardening precepts that led to a lot of extra work in my garden is the desire to have color and structure in every section. Having hydrangeas blooming along each walkway is a wonderful experience this time of year. It also means watering is needed everywhere when rain is not abundant. This year the spring rains led to vigorous growth and many flowers, and now the plants are having a hard time keeping it all going. The same is true for shallow-rooted Japanese maples, especially those planted in the last couple of years. I have a dozen or more, and I need to give them extra water at least for a couple of years after planting.

A surprisingly easy area is at the bottom of our slope, near the creek. It gets a few rays of morning sun and then is in shade the rest of the day. The plants, which have required no watering so far, include rhododendron, oakleaf hydrangea, ferns large and small (including *adiantum venustum*), tiarella, woodland aster, yellowroot, a fringetree and of course a hydrangea. Even it has not needed extra water. It is green, peaceful, weedless and one of our favorite places to walk. I have not added or removed plants in at least 3 years. That may be the secret.

GARDENS NEW AND OLD

by Nicholas Klise

Gardens, like other applied arts, require a lot of thought. Winter is the time of year when gardeners have the luxury of time to think, plan and philosophize. Besides the ordering of seeds, the leafing through catalogs, the reading, the planning of projects and the repair of hardscaping, winter is the time to take deep breaths and think deep thoughts. It is a time to float above things and take in the big picture. It is a time to reassess your gardening endeavors. You are, after all, getting older. So is your garden.

When I was a young man, it was impossible to imagine a later age; when I was a young gardener the thought of standing in the shade of a tree that I was planting was exhilarating and drove me into a frenzy of heavy-duty gardening, especially after Morris and I bought the undeveloped and derelict property near Red Lion, Pennsylvania. But as time went on, I realized that a garden at any age had to be constantly reassessed, year by year, and I started counting time, not in the days of childhood, nor in the months of youth, but in the years of a mature gardener. All too soon I was cutting down trees instead of planting them! A garden is an organic, ever-changing life force that, like the gardener, evolves, changes and is subject to the vagaries of circumstance and history. If you have been gardening for a few years, you are due for a check-up every winter.

There is a lot to be said for maturity. On the other hand, nothing is more unattractive than derelict old age. A brand-new garden is not particularly attractive, but a garden should never (ever!) look old. There is nothing wrong with a beautiful, well-maintained antique, but one should not want to live in a flea market surrounded by junk that is cast off ephemera. As we change, so should our gardens. A garden should look, and be, at the perpetual edge of vibrant maturity. It should celebrate the things we cherish by their age and the things on which we bestow great expectations. It should always be on the upward slope of the ascendant curve, never quite at its zenith, and, certainly not on the slippery downward slope. In this respect, a garden should be under perpetual renovation, not because of incompetent gardening, but because the garden (and the gardener) changes over time.

The most apparent example, here in the Mason-Dixon neighborhood, is the increasing shade cast by woody plants as they mature. Every year I have to attend to the woody plants, either pruning them or taking them out, to adjust the amount of light I have. To maintain the wildflower area (that we call "the field") all incipient woody plants have to be removed every year. Obviously, trees blown over in storms or those diseased and dying have to be taken from the garden. Now is the perfect time to take stock and take some action.

Another way to think about how to keep a garden looking youthful and vibrant is to think about simplicity. The layout—the "big picture"—the "bones"—of a garden should be very, very simple. As a garden grows up (especially if it "grows up like Topsy") it becomes a muddle of this and that, without any order and looks old and disheveled long before its time. An attractive garden is not only orderly, but also has a clear-cut, simple, easily comprehended (I hesitate to use the word) "plan". I know, I know, gardeners just hate the word. Regardless, one has a basic layout of things: driveway, sidewalk,

trees...whatever. This is the time of year to think about how to make the whole thing simpler visually. It might involve removing plants. This is not to say that the garden should become more boring—quite the contrary. The horticulture of a garden should become more sophisticated and complex as time goes on. As a gardener your tastes and interests should grow to become more refined; after all, that is the whole joy of becoming a mature individual. Your world expands as you become more cognizant of possibilities; there are new challenges and worlds of new plants to grow. Why hesitate to be confined by the architecture of the past?

Another thing to think about at this time of year is why you are growing the things you are growing. Are you growing leftovers from a former time of your life? Or worse, are you growing stupid, old plants left over from someone else's life? Those butchered "foundation plants" that were here when you bought the house—do they have any relevance to you; do you have any relevance to them? What about all that mowed grass "lawn"? The kids used to play there and your former husband loved mowing that grass; the kids are now adults and you divorced the jerk over ten years ago, for god's sake—what does all this have to do with the gardener that you are today? Nothing. Gardening is an on-going process that engages the gardener in the here-and-now. With so much to learn, so many plants to try, so many seasons to look forward to, why struggle with the past?

Even if you have been fairly successful at growing certain things, it would be wise to re-evaluate them in light of what might be a revised routine. For example, if you now spend part of the year away from your garden, it is certainly not necessary to put up with things that only look magnificent when you are hundreds of miles away. If you are at home in your garden in winter, grow things that look great in winter; if you are at home in summer, grow things that look great in summer. If you have a party every year at a certain time (say, Thanksgiving family, or Fourth-of-July neighbors) plan and plant for those specific times. There is an almost infinite number of plants to choose from. The problem is learning about them, which is exactly what you should be doing this time of year. How about Cyclamen that bloom at Thanksgiving? How about campanulas for the Fourth-of-July? Spring blooming bulbs; fall blooming bulbs. Shrubs that look fabulous at Thanksgiving; shrubs that look fabulous on the Fourth of July.

The other day, at the program of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Rock Garden Society, John Bieber and Darrell Trout (the Daphne experts, who will be speaking at the Mason-Dixon program in March) told an illuminating antidote: a woman asked them, after a lecture, about what to do with a Daphne that was all stretched out and ugly. "Why don't you prune it?" asked John. "Well" she said, "I am afraid I would kill it if I pruned it." John replied: "What difference does it make if you killed it? Why are you living with a plant that you consider ugly?"

Yes, there is a lot to think about this time of year—big, deep thoughts. Foremost to keep in mind, however, is that the activity of gardening is intensely personal. You do not garden for anyone else but yourself; don't garden for anyone else's approval. There must be a direct relationship between what we grow in the garden and how we feel and think at this, present, time of our lives. Every individual gardener has to make the call, after introspection, at this time of year.

[Excerpted from The Writer's Almanac, by Garrison Keillor]

It was on this day in 1893 that the Supreme Court ruled that the tomato was a vegetable, not a fruit. Their ruling was in light of a 10-year-old piece of legislation called the Tariff Act of 1883, which ruled that a 10 percent tax had to be paid on all imported vegetables. The case, known as *Nix vs. Hedden*, was filed by John Nix and several other tomato importers against Edward Hedden, the Collector of Customs at the Port of New York. The case wound up in the Supreme Court, where Webster's Dictionary was heavily cited. The plaintiffs argued that according to the dictionary definition of fruit — the structure that grows from the flower of the plant and holds the seeds — a tomato was a fruit. They called two witnesses, both of whom heard the definitions of "fruit" and "vegetable" out of the dictionary and were asked whether those definitions were any different in the world of trade and commerce. Both talked for a while but said no, the definitions were no different. The counsel for the plaintiff then read the definition of tomato.

Each side then proceeded to read a series of Webster's Dictionary definitions. The counsel for the defense read "egg plant," "squash," "pepper," and "cucumber" — all of which, like tomato, are fruits in the botanical sense — but which are widely considered vegetables. In response, the counsel for the plaintiff read the definitions of "potato," "turnip," "parsnip," "cauliflower," "cabbage," and "carrot," none of them botanical fruits but all considered vegetables.

Justice Gray delivered the opinion of the Court, and he said: "Botanically speaking, tomatoes are the fruit of a vine, just as are cucumbers, squashes, beans, and peas. But in the common language of the people, whether sellers or consumers of provisions, all these are vegetables which are grown in kitchen gardens, and which, whether eaten cooked or raw, are, like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, celery, and lettuce, usually served at dinner in, with, or after the soup, fish, or meats which constitute the principal part of the repast, and not, like fruits generally, as dessert."

Nix v. Hedden has been referenced in numerous cases since, including a 1990 Second Circuit Court of Appeals case about a delay in a tomato shipment. The judge wrote: "In common parlance tomatoes are vegetables, as the Supreme Court observed long ago, see *Nix v. Hedden*, although botanically speaking they are actually a fruit. Regardless of classification, people have been enjoying tomatoes for centuries, even Mr. Pickwick, as Dickens relates, ate his chops in 'tomata' sauce."

The debate has continued, but the problem is that "vegetable" has no actual scientific or botanical definition — it is a culinary term. In 1987, the state of Arkansas designated the Vine Ripe Pink Tomato as their official state fruit *and* vegetable.

Tomatoes were slow to catch on in the United States — in 1845, the editor of the *Boston Courier* wrote that tomatoes were "the mere fungus of an offensive plant, which one cannot touch without an immediate application of soap and water with an infusion of eau de cologne ... deliver us, O ye caterers of luxuries, ye gods and goddesses of the science of cookery! deliver us from tomatoes!" This opinion was echoed over and over again by journalists, agricultural experts, farmers, and gardeners across the country.

July 16, Saturday 1:00 PM

Annual picnic hosted by Bill and Susan Yonkers
738 Bomont Rd.
Lutherville, MD 21093
410-560-1853
Bring a dish to share and your lawn chair.
Also, bring cuttings to exchange.

PARKING IS LIMITED. Everyone please drive up the driveway to the house to deliver food and passengers. Bill Yonkers will direct you where to park and when spaces are full he will direct you to park on Chapel Court off Mays Chapel Road and walk down. The plan is to minimize confusion and NOT turn around in the neighbor's driveway, only turn around in the Yonkers driveway. It is important to keep peace with the neighbors.

Directions:

We live near the intersection of I-695 and I-83. From the North, take the Padonia Road exit off I-83, turn right (West), and at the top of the hill, turn left on Jennifer Road, then turn right on Mays Chapel Road, continue past the golf course and tennis courts, turn right on Bomont Road. At the bottom of the hill is 738 Bomont Road.

From the South and West, take the Falls Road exit off I-695, (I-83 North from the City becomes Falls Road if you keep to the left at I-695), continue past the shopping area and turn right at the light onto Seminary Road, turn at the first left onto Mays Chapel Road and go past Timonium Road on the right, turn left onto Bomont Road (turn around and go back to Bomont Road if you see tennis courts and a golf course). At the bottom of the hill is 738 Bomont Road.

From the East, take the I-83 North exit off I-695, take the first exit off I-83 onto Timonium Road West, go to the end of the road and turn right at the stop sign. then turn left onto Bomont Road (turn around and go back to Bomont Road if you see tennis courts and a golf course). At the bottom of the hill is 738 Bomont Road.

OUR NEXT PROGRAMS

To assist our Program Chair, please contact her with suggestions for speakers, field trips, workshops, etc. Joan King's email is jsking11@juno.com and phone is 717-284-5239.

July 16 (Saturday) 1pm Yonkers garden, Lutherville, MD
Annual picnic hosted by Bill and Susan Yonkers, 738 Bomont Road, Lutherville 21093, 410-560-1853. Bring a dish to share, your lawn chair, and cuttings to exchange. See directions in this newsletter.

August 20 (Saturday) 10am Norrisville Library Pavilion
Trough workshop. Cost \$10.00 per participant. Bring a plastic sheet or tarp to cover the picnic table and a board to build your trough on. We only have the pavilion for one day, so you will need to take your trough home to cure. This workshop will focus on making small troughs, bring a form or we will provide some forms. Bring gloves, the thin vinyl disposable gloves work best. Wear old clothes. Bring your lunch. Also, please bring some brooms, brushes and dustpans and help clean up afterwards. Limited to 15 participants. Contact Joan King to sign up, see her contact information above.

September 17 (Saturday) 10am Norrisville Library Pavilion
We will have our fall plant sale as usual. If you are bringing plants, please be there by 9:30.

October 15 (Saturday) 12 noon social, 1 pm meeting Norrisville Library
Tentative, Malcolm McGregor. He is the new editor of the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly and is the former editor of the Scottish Rock Garden Club's The Rock Garden.

November 19 (Saturday) 12 noon social, 1 pm meeting Norrisville Library
Jane Grushow, Travels in Turkey.

NOTE: In case of threatening weather, call one of the weather captains below to check on roads and meeting status.
Weather Captains: Dick Arnold, Jarrettsville MD (410) 692-9622; Bill/Sue Yonkers, Baltimore MD (410)560-1853; Jerry Hudgens, Churchville MD (410)836-2469; Jane Grushow, Lancaster PA (717)733-4287

THE MASON-DIXON LINE

RETURN UNDELIVERED COPIES TO:
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Yearly dues for the Mason-Dixon Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) are \$10 (single or joint at same address). Make checks payable to M-DC/NARGS. Mail to Jerry Hudgens, see above.

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Newsletter is published four times a year and lists all events, plant sales and field trips. Meetings are held at Norrisville Library, Norrisville, MD, a mile south of the Mason-Dixon Line.