Sentimental Houseplants
Marg Gillies

Over the past forty-five years, five different homes in three different communities have been home for an assortment of houseplants, a few of which have a history of their own. Then there have been the others that I tend to think as ‘here today - gone tomorrow’ plants, whose colourful blossoms have caught my attention but were not meant to become permanent household residents.

Plants such as poinsettias, chrysanthemums, Easter lilies, and gerbers are seasonal in their nature and no extraordinary efforts have ever been taken on my part to preserve them once their colourful blossoms have faded away. Somehow I have always justified the expense of replacing these kinds of plants from time to time by manipulating the household budget! Like a good book, the reality is that plants are as soothing to the soul compared to the aftermath of a sugary fix.

Over the years I have developed a sentimental attachment to four of the permanent house plants that made the move from North-western Ontario to Guelph more than twelve years ago. Like we humans, each of these house plants has tended to have had its own ups and downs during the course of its life’s journey.

My first houseplant in 1965 was a very small oleander that my father started as a cutting from a beautiful oleander shrub that had grown from a cutting that had been given to him by a friend, who had removed it from a roadside shrub along a Florida causeway in 1955. By 1970, my oleander was a good size potted shrub that I somehow squeezed into the front seat of VW Beetle during a move from London Ontario to Fort Frances. Twelve years later, this plant had to be destroyed due to an infestation that could not be controlled. Fortunately I had taken cuttings and thus I had a fourth generation oleander that still survives to this day.

Although the blooming season for oleanders is said to be from summer to autumn, I have found that my oleander will produce clusters of blossoms during the winter months and beyond, which tend to be a paler pink compared to the deeper rosy pink that appears outdoors in the summer months.

The second houseplant that I cherish is a Christmas cactus that I have had for thirty-five years. I consider this plant a ‘3rd generation plant’ due to the fact my aunt gave me a cutting from her Christmas cactus during a summer time visit to Toronto. My aunt’s Christmas cactus started as a cutting brought back to Canada from her family home in Germany in 1949. That
If you would like to contact me, you can do it in two recommended ways.

Please call 519 824 4120 ext. 53615
or email me at bparke@uoguelph.ca

Well winter is upon us… cold days, and freshly fallen snow. Hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season.

Here’s a summary of our Volunteer Info Session #7, which was held on Oct. 4, 2010 in our new greenhouse:

Alan provided a brief background about the greenhouse:
- greenhouse has taken a long time to come about... greater than 1 year to build
- Arboretum staff and especially members of the Plant Sale group are thrilled to have this new facility
- greenhouse is modern... with vents that work, rolling benches to allow usage of as much space as possible etc.
- funding of greenhouse - approximately 1/4 M $ provided by the Gosling Foundation. A special thanks to Philip and Susan Gosling for their ongoing support.
- greenhouse will allow for starting plant material for The Arboretum's collections from seeds/seedlings; then plants can be put out to the various collections.
- research can also be conducted in the greenhouse i.e. Elm Recovery Project.
- Plant Sale group will utilize greenhouse for propagating plants, and nurturing plants for the Annual Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale.

The new greenhouse is the largest capital project at The Arboretum since 1974 - OAC Centennial Centre and 1978 - Nature Centre

Sean provided more details/specifications about our new greenhouse:
- 3600 sq. ft.... more than three times size of old greenhouse.
- greenhouse is a 'polycarbonate box', it's a prefab 'Westbrook Skyline II' with customization per The Arboretum's requirements.
- greenhouse can hold heat, is climate controlled, with roof vents that opens all the way (old greenhouse had no effective climate control).
- sensors on the outside/top of greenhouse detect wind and rain and allow for closing of roof vents.
- greenhouse is equipped with a shade cloth, which will be generally open or closed. Shade cloth also holds in heat and is reflective.
- 3 zones in the greenhouse (1,2,3)... each with separate controls.
- zone 1 will likely be used for over wintering specimens... keeping seeds cold.
- other side of greenhouse will likely be kept warm.
- furnaces are natural gas... cleaner and more energy efficient.
- fans circulate the heat or circulate air in the summer.
- 2 large green bins are for rain water storage holding 620 gallons each. Water will not contain chlorine nor salts... so better for our specimens. Well water was used previously. There is an overflow tube out of the back of the greenhouse.
- plant benches allow for much more working space. They are rolling benches... thus maximizing usable space.
- doors close to keep zones separate and at proper temperature.
- in the middle aisle of the greenhouse is an old speaker from The Arboretum's Auditorium... so music or radio can be hooked up to it.

(Coordinator's Corner on page 3)
• Arboretum staff still need to determine how to organize/segment the zones in the greenhouse... i.e. where potting soil, pasteurizer etc. will be stored.
• drainage - over watering of plants on trays will flow through the gravel into the ground
• sink provided (in main aisle) to wash hands and pots. A small septic bed had to be provided to accommodate this feature.
• no chemicals are to be used in the greenhouse.
• exterior walls have air pockets in between the layers... this shouldn't be a problem with stuff, i.e. algae growing inside.
• mist bed could be set up for automatic misting.
• greenhouse could be used for fund raising type plants... i.e. Easter Lilies or Poinsettia.
• maintenance costs should be minimal.
• greenhouse has a 30 yr life (outside walls).
• computer control could be programmed for a call-out to Arboretum staff in case of problem... i.e. roof vents not closing during rain/wind storm

The greenhouse has been named 'The Henry Kock Propagation Centre' in memory of Henry, his dedication to his work at The Arboretum and with the Elm Recovery Project. Sean actually apprenticed under Henry.

Other Arboretum news/items:

Plant Sale/Seed Volunteer Groups:
• the Monday/Thursday morning Plant Sale group is now finished for the season — the Thursday morning Seed Group has started up... working on cleaning seeds. Currently there are 6 members.

40th Anniversary Events:
• an appreciation event likely will be held for the high profile donors or potential new donors (part of the Better Planet campaign).
• November 1970 was the official start date of The Arboretum... so it's now a year long celebration of our 40th anniversary.
• The Open House was held in June 2010.
• Dedication of the Henry Kock Propagation Centre was held on September 27, 2010.

If you missed this Volunteer Info Session, held in the new greenhouse... by all means stop by and check it out... it is glorious!!!

Plant Sale 2010 – Saturday September 11, 2010

What a great day for our Annual Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale. It was great to have several hundred people out for the sale. The Plant Sale was indeed fun! Considering that this was another challenging year (without the use of a functioning greenhouse) financial results were good and better than the 2009 financials. The Net revenue for 2010’s Plant Sale was $20,113.04.
No, we did not put on our running shoes, but did bundle up warm and put on our boots for a tracking lesson from Chris. A fresh snow the morning of December 6th had inspired him and in his usual enthusiastic way, he led us to be inspired too.

Before going outside for our hike to the Gosling Gardens, we had some indoor demonstrations on clean sand spread on paper. We were to replicate the way the different mammals do their movements. We found that they all fell into categories: First the **Walkers**…humans were easy, but this also includes coyotes, foxes, dogs, cats, groundhogs, deer, porcupines, opossums. These creatures leave an alternate pattern as they walk, most putting their hind foot in the same spot that their front foot was, thus saving energy. Just try to get your fingers to do this in the sand. Not like *walking through the yellow pages* at all.

Other groups were: **Jumpers**, rabbits, squirrels and deer mice. **Leapers**, weasels and mink, **Amblers**, raccoons and skunks, **Tunnelers**, voles and shrews. The tracks they leave are called trails. The littlest creatures often leave their trails along fences or similar protective structures so shelter is near at hand, lest a predator find them.

After class, I found all this information beautifully illustrated in the booklet *Mammals of the Arboretum*, available at the office and well worth the $8.00.

---

**Wild Comfort: the Solace of Nature**

A book by Kathleen Dean Moore

Any nature-lovers on your gift list? This book fills the bill. She writes of her experiences in exploring and experiencing the natural world…from Oregon to Mexico, from mountains to beaches, from snow-shoeing to skipping stones, not to mention winter camping, kayaking at night, running rapids…she almost gives Chris a run for his money. Her husband is a biologist and adds much factual material to her metaphorical and philosophical musings. The book was written at a time when she had had many losses and was trying to make sense of it all. Sometimes she quotes Rachel Carson; sometimes she sounds like Rachel Carson. Beautiful prose. Accurate science. I cannot recommend this book too highly. Available in the Guelph Public Library and the Bookshelf.

This review was submitted by Ann Estill

---

**Bell Volunteer Grant - 2010**

Once again I received a Bell Volunteer Grant… for volunteering a minimum of 50 hours in this calendar year. I asked that this year’s grant of $500 be allocated to the Plant Sale Group… for additional supplies or bare root perennials, as required. This is my 4th year to receive this grant. A special thanks to Bell Canada for providing this financial incentive for its employees and retirees who volunteer within their communities.

**Children’s Theatre – November 9, 2010**

Another great performance by DuffleBag for their interactive rendition of Cinderella. Children and parents alike enjoyed the performance and are looking forward to the next Children’s Theatre presentation. Without a sponsor we will not be holding a spring Children’s Theatre performance. At this time of writing we have no confirmed sponsor.
cutting came from my grandmother’s Christmas cactus, which had been in the family since the early 1900s.

When we moved to a larger home in 1976, we were given a Philodendron and an Oxalis as housewarming gifts. These plants continue to thrive in our Guelph home. Although I tend to prefer plants with blossoms, I did learn to enjoy the Philodendron as it twined its way in and around the railings along a stairway. When we moved to Guelph, our daughter had the job of ‘unwinding’ this plant so that it could make the move with us. When she completed the job, the length of the plant was similar in length to that of the house!

In some ways the Oxalis with its clover like leaflets and tiny white funnel-shaped blossoms has been a bit like a cat with nine lives over the years. When I have nearly given up hope on this plant, miraculously it somehow makes a lovely comeback. As I write this in early December, the Oxalis along with the Christmas cactus and Oleander are blooming and provide me with memories that connect to special people in my past.

House plants have an endearing quality to them no matter how little space or time one may have for them. People have often asked me what happens to the houseplants when I go on a holiday. The plants that I value most have spent as much as six weeks enclosed in clear plastic bags that become their greenhouse. As you might guess, I find a way to recycle those dry cleaner bags!
Rural Gardens of Grey & Bruce Counties
June 21-25, 2011

Please join Clare Newson Travel on a Five Day Tour of unique Gardens in Grey and Bruce Counties. We have scheduled stops at 18 private and public gardens. Some of these private gardens are open to the public by appointment and some are hidden gems to which Clare Newson Travel has received a personal invitation to visit. In addition to the gardens, we will be stopping at places of interest throughout the region which are sure to please the gardeners and explorers in the group.

Features of this Trip include:
♦ 18 Private and Public Gardens, Collingwood Arboretum & more gardens!
♦ Tobermory Flower Pot Island Boat Cruise
♦ The Best Pie you ever tasted!
♦ Includes All Breakfasts Three Lunches 1 Dinner and Surprise Treats
♦ Hotel stays in Collingwood, Owen Sound, Tobermory and Kincardine

Price: $865.00 per person Double Accommodation
       112.45 HST
       $977.45 Total

Please Call Office for Single, Triple and Quad prices.

Pricing: Includes Motorcoach Transportation, Tour Host, Admissions, 4 Nights Accommodation, All Breakfasts, 3 Lunches and 1 Dinner, bottled water supplied.

Cancellation Policy:
Trip Deposits are forfeited if registration cancelled less than 30 days prior to the trip leaving. In the event of trip being cancelled by CNT, all uncommitted monies will be refunded.

Clare Newson Travel Responsibility: Clare Newson Travel cannot be held responsible or liable for: 1. The acts or omissions of contracted parties, or anyone other than Clare Newson Travel personnel. 2. For any inconvenience, loss of employment, upset, disappointment, distress or frustration whether physical or mental, however caused, except where caused directly by the tour operator. 3. Any loss or damage, injury or death that occurs as a result of Government actions, acts of God, late arrivals missed connections and other factors beyond our direct control. 4. Any additional costs incurred or any ancillary loss sustained as a result of cancellations or delays of tours caused by inclement weather conditions, acts of God, or any other event, which results in one or more persons being unable to continue the tour through no direct fault of the tour organizer. 5. CNT reserves the right to make comparable substitutions.

TICO R#50008368
Sept 1, 2010

See page 7 For the list of Rural Gardens of Grey and Bruce Counties that will be visited
A few minutes ago every tree was excited, bowing to the roaring storm, waving, swirling, tossing their branches in glorious enthusiasm like worship. But though to the outer ear these trees are now silent, their songs never cease.

-John Muir, naturalist, explorer, and writer (1838-1914)

SNAP GUELPH’s
‘Volunteer of the Month’

Once again the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington is continuing with this program in 2011. This is a great way to recognize one of our Arboretum volunteers and to profile The Arboretum in the Guelph community. Profiled volunteers will have their photo taken while they are volunteering. If one of our volunteers is selected, he/she will also receive a $50 gift certificate from North By Northwest.

If you wish to nominate one of your fellow volunteers here at The Arboretum, please submit their name and a few words about why you are nominating him/her.

Here are the guidelines regarding what I have to submit on the nomination form from the Volunteer Centre’s website.

1. describe the impact your nominee’s volunteer work has had on your organization and the larger community
2. explain how your volunteer’s dedication has helped achieve your organization’s mission
3. describe any time(s) the volunteer has (have) gone above and beyond their volunteer position to help your organization
Plant Sale Talliers

Grounds Group

Grounds Crew putting covers on hoop houses

Shumard Oak planting in the Oak Collection

Canadian National Cross-country Championships held at The Arboretum November 2010

Pictures of the Plant sale groups, the Oak tree planting and the Cross Country Championships were provided by Sean Fox