

OCTOBER 1980

The

Boxwood Bulletin

A QUARTERLY DEVOTED TO MAN'S OLDEST GARDEN ORNAMENTAL



Photo: Courtesy Virginia State Library

Original Plantings of Boxwood at Scotchtown, Hanover County, Virginia

Edited Under The Direction Of
THE AMERICAN BOXWOOD SOCIETY

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Historical Sketch of Scotchtown

Compiled by Scot Butler



photo: Scot Butler

Boxwood at Scotchtown

Scotchtown is one of the oldest and certainly the most historic home in Hanover County, Virginia. In 1717 a 9,976-acre plantation, lying on New Found River, was granted by George I to Colonel Charles Chiswell of Williamsburg as a tract for his country home. Chiswell, who came to Virginia from Scotland in the late seventeenth century, named his plantation "Scotchtown," hoping to establish a township of Scotsmen whom he had invited to come over and settle. Here he also planned to build a castle.

The exact date of construction of the Scotchtown plantation house is uncertain. Since the land grant provided that the property be seated within two years, it is believed that the house was built around 1719. It is certain that it existed in 1732 when Colonel Chiswell was visited by Colonel William Byrd of Westover during his "progress to the mines." After the plantation house was completed, a mill and tannery were built. The foundation for the castle was started but an epidemic broke out which caused the death of several of the workmen and the township was abandoned.

The house at Scotchtown is of massive proportions and unusual design. Measuring 93 feet in length by 35 feet in depth, it was one of the largest houses in the Colony. It is a frame story-and-a-half structure on a brick foundation with an early jerkin-head (clipped gable) roof, unbroken the full length of the house. It has a full-height basement

and an enormous undivided second floor under the roof. Two massive chimneys serve the eight rooms on the main floor and the eight basement rooms, four rooms on each floor being clustered around each chimney and served by corner fireplaces. There is a wide center hall separating the two clusters of rooms on the main floor; it runs the full depth of the house. The architectural historian Thomas T. Waterman noted the following features of interest at Scotchtown:

"The great height of the first floor above the ground recalls Stratford, the home of the Lee family. At Scotchtown there are three long flights of exterior stone steps notable for the unusual treatment of the risers, which are paneled. The panels are flat and extend the whole length of the step. . .

The occurrence of corner fireplaces in the Chiswell houses (including the one in Williamsburg [S.B.]) . . . may not seem as significant as it really is for the reason that such fireplaces are not uncommon in early Virginia houses. . . Apparently, angle fireplaces were not used in seventeenth century houses in Virginia, for plans were only one room deep. This was a condition that continued until after 1725, but from about this time until after 1750 they were often seen in the lesser mansions."

A succession of distinguished occupants lived at Scotchtown in the eighteenth century. Colonel

John Chiswell, who married Elizabeth Randolph of Turkey Island, succeeded his father. The home then passed to John Chiswell's son-in-law, John Robinson, Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer of the Colony. Robinson's executors partitioned the estate, selling the home tract of 960 acres to John Payne and his wife Mary Coles Payne, a cousin of Patrick Henry. Their daughter Dolley became the wife of James Madison, fourth President of the United States. Although residents of Hanover County, the Paynes were visiting friends at Guilford, North Carolina, when Dolley was born in 1768. They returned to Hanover when Dolley was nine months old and, being Quakers, established themselves in the vicinity of Cedar Creek Meeting House. Regrettably, no authentic records are available to show the exact date when the family took up residence at Scotchtown. Since John Payne sold the plantation to its most illustrious owner, Patrick Henry, in 1771, Dolley's association with Scotchtown, despite the legend which still persists, was limited. At most she lived there for three years in infancy. Her maternal grandparents lived at Coles' Hill, not too far distant from Scotchtown, and her recollections of the place were probably based on the early years when she stayed with them. She was in her early teens when Colonel Tarleton and his raiders spread consternation throughout the neighborhood. Tradition has it that one of these raiders rode his horse up the stone steps and through Scotchtown's center hall.

Scotchtown was Patrick Henry's home from 1771 until he was elected first Governor of Virginia in 1776 and moved to the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg. He continued to maintain his residence at Scotchtown until 1777, however, when he sold the plantation to Colonel Wilson Miles Cary. The years at Scotchtown cover the period of Patrick Henry's leadership in shaping the course of events leading to revolution and independence. They were the greatest and most fruitful years of his life. By 1771 he was recognized as one of the most influential delegates in the House of Burgesses with a strong following among those who opposed temporizing with British pressure on the Colonies. In 1774 he was elected a delegate to the First Continental Congress. In March 1775 he delivered his famous "Liberty or Death" oration advocating immediate measures to put Virginia in a "state of defense," and in April he commanded the Gunpowder Expedition to force Governor Dunmore to make restitution for the gunpowder removed from the Williamsburg powderhouse. Patrick Henry attended the Second Continental Congress but was quickly recalled to Virginia to serve as Commander-in-Chief of the forces raised for the defense of Virginia. On June 29, 1776, Henry was elected the first Governor of Virginia; he was re-elected in 1777 and 1778 and again in 1785 and 1786. Henry's first wife, Sarah Shelton of Rural Plains, died at Scotchtown in the spring of 1776 and is buried in the family graveyard. Shortly before selling Scotchtown in 1777 Patrick Henry married Dorothea Dandridge, a second cousin of Martha Washington.

A report of the National Park Service contains the following description of the subsidiary structure and plantings at Scotchtown in the eighteenth century:

"The road to the house in the 1700's ran east of the house. In the rear yard were the out-buildings — a schoolhouse, office, kitchen, smokehouse, wash house, ash house, blacksmith shop, plantation warehouse or store and guesthouse. Half a mile from the mansion on New Found River was the mill and slave quarters. A paling fence enclosed the main house. Boxwood in front of the house, oak and other trees and shrubbery were planted in the yard and along the fence."



photo: Scot Butler

Foundation plantings of Boxwood at Scotchtown



photo: Scot Butler

Foundation plantings of Boxwood at Scotchtown

When Baron Ludwig von Clozen visited Scotchtown in 1782 he remarked that, "In a word it is one of the most pleasing establishments in America."

Subsequent to Colonel Cary's occupancy, Scotchtown was owned by Benjamin Forsythe, and later by the families of John Mosby Sheppard and John Taylor. The Taylor family acquired Scotchtown in the 1820's and shortly thereafter remodeled the residence. The two massive chimneys were razed and replaced by four chimneys and interior partitions were moved to conform to the location of the new chimneys. During the remodeling some of the original mahogany and walnut panelling and marble mantels were torn out and discarded.

Scotchtown continued in the ownership of the Sheppard and Taylor families until 1949 when Miss Lavina Sheppard Taylor, last of the Taylor family to own Scotchtown, died. Portions of the 960-acre tract had been sold off through the years, reducing the home tract to 99 acres in 1949. The residence was maintained in relatively good condition but sometime before 1936 Miss Taylor was forced by ill health to move out and when the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) measured and photographed the house in 1936 it was occupied by tenants and had begun to show evidence of neglect. Meanwhile the outbuildings and grounds had been allowed to deteriorate badly.

After protracted litigation following Miss Taylor's death the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) acquired the Scotchtown plantation house and 26.6 acres in 1958 through the efforts of its Hanover Chapter and the generosity of Mr. George M. Weems. The Scotchtown Restoration Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Leslie D. Campbell, Sr., obtained the services of Mr. Walter M. Macomber to plan and direct the restoration work. Mr. Macomber employed the techniques and practices which guided the restoration work at Williamsburg. Primary reliance was on careful examination of the structure to

determine original architectural details, supplemented by photographs and descriptions of the building and archeological excavations around the exterior foundations. Today the Scotchtown mansion stands completely restored and authentically furnished for the period of Patrick Henry's residency, including such Henry family possessions and memorabilia as the APVA has been able to acquire. The office and kitchen have been reconstructed on their original sites in the rear yard. The grounds have been landscaped with beautiful restraint by the Garden Club of Virginia. In addition to several original large boxwood plantings close to the house a boxwood hedge borders one side of the yard.

Scotchtown is a registered national historic landmark. It is located on Virginia State Route 685 about nine miles northwest of Ashland and U. S. Route 1. It is open to the public from April through October daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m.). (See map pg. 28.)

* * * * *

SOURCES

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2. National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, *A Brief Report on Scotchtown*, (extract from *A Report on Red Hill, Last Home and Burial Place of Patrick Henry*, unpublished report, 1962).
3. National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, *National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings - Scotchtown* (unpublished report by Horace J. Sheely, Jr., Survey Historian, August 1965).
4. Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, *Scotchtown, Hanover County, Virginia* (illustrated folder, no date).
5. Robert B. Lancaster, *A Sketch of the Early History of Hanover County Virginia*, Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond, 1976.



photo: Al Beecher

ABS members at Scotchtown

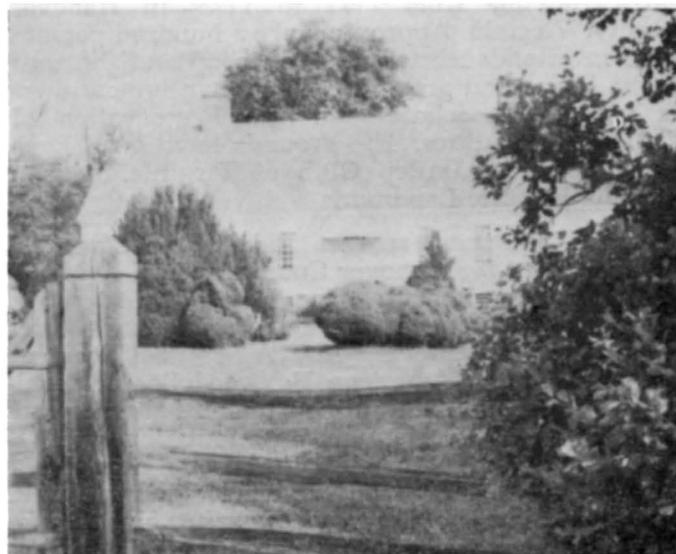
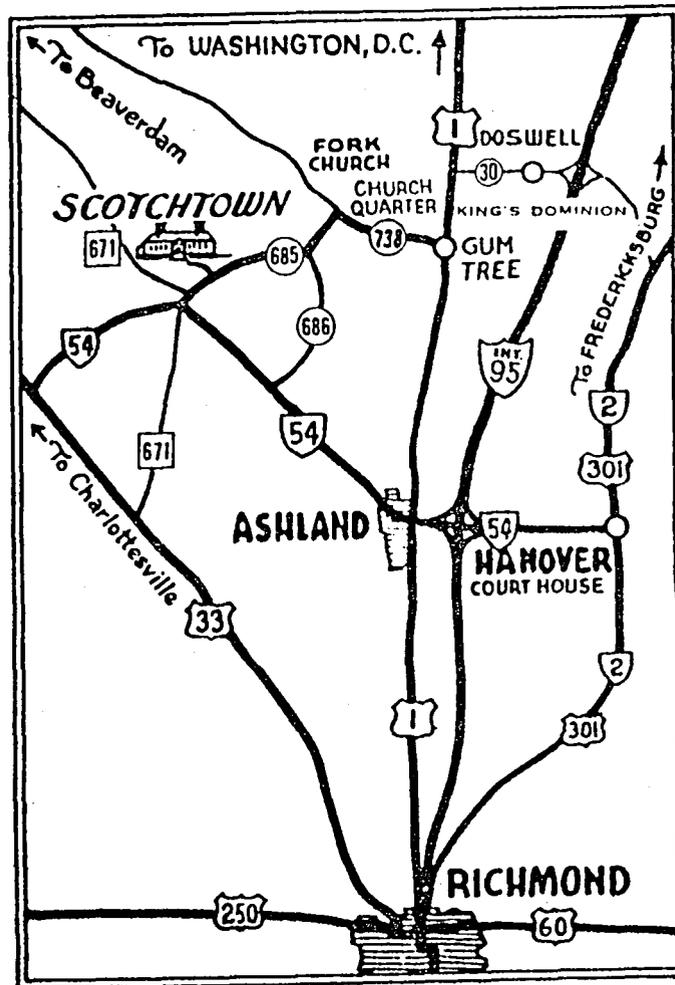


photo: Al Beecher

Boxwood at Scotchtown

Scotchtown Boxwood Workshop



The Scotchtown Boxwood Workshop, sponsored by the American Boxwood Society in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service of Virginia, was held on July 9th at Scotchtown, the home of Patrick Henry from 1771 to 1778, in Hanover County, Virginia. Approximately a hundred persons were in attendance for the workshop and the tour of the house and grounds. Scotchtown is now owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. The grounds have been landscaped by the Garden Club of Virginia. It is a Virginia Historic Landmark.

At the morning session, Ralph E. LaRue, Extension Agent for Hanover County, served as Moderator. Mrs. Rosalie Fulwinder, Resident Hostess for Scotchtown, extended greetings and gave a brief history of Scotchtown. Mr. Albert S. Beecher, President of the American Boxwood Society, welcomed the group and outlined some of the accomplishments of the Society since its founding in 1961. Beecher invited nonmembers to become acquainted with *The Boxwood Bulletin* published quarterly. He remarked that *The Boxwood Bulletin* helps to provide timely information on the culture of growing boxwood as well as a wealth of information on boxwood varieties and the historic use of boxwood in gardens.

Mr. William R. Shelton of Rural Plains followed with an account of the *History and Use of Boxwood in Hanover County*. (See full text of his remarks elsewhere in this issue).

The final speaker on the morning program was Dr. Bernice Speese of Williamsburg, Virginia who is Second Vice President of the American Boxwood Society. She discussed *Boxwood Cultivars* that have been introduced. Samples of the cultivars discussed were passed around to give those in attendance an opportunity to examine each specimen closely. Dr. Speese's presentation was followed by a lively question-and-answer period.

Following a picnic lunch served on the grounds, Mrs. Rosalie Fulwinder, Resident Hostess, and her assistants conducted group tours of the house.

The afternoon session was moderated by Charles K. Curry, Extension Agent, Henrico County. He introduced Mr. Marshall Trammel, Jr., State Supervisor, Plant Pest Control Section for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, who discussed the difference between the new and old legislation covering all aspects of the nursery industry. The major points stressed were:

A. Under the new Plants and Plant Products Inspection Law (effective July 1, 1980), the Commissioner and/or his assistants may stop sale of nursery stock for the following reasons under Section 3.1-188.39:

1. If nursery stock is in possession of an unlicensed nurseryman or dealer.
2. If nursery stock is not accompanied by a valid certificate of inspection that indicates such stock was inspected in the state of origin and found to be relatively free of harmful plant pests.
3. If nursery stock is suspected of being infested or infected with a plant pest (only if plants exhibit adverse visible conditions or if nursery stock is determined to have originated in an area known to have a particularly bad pest situation, such as imported fire ant). Samples may be taken and submitted for analysis to determine if a pathogen is present in order to help the nurseryman and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services deal with the problem.
4. If nursery stock is infested or infected with plant pests. (This was the only condition allowing for the issuance of stop sale notices under the old Plant Pest Act.)

B. Under section 3.1-188.40 of the Plants and Plant Products Inspection Law, nursery stock cannot be seized unless a warrant is secured from the court. (Seizure used to be allowed at the discretion of the individual inspector under the old Plant Pest Act.)

The most obvious effect of the new Plants and Plant Products Inspection Law on the boxwood industry is number 2.3 above dealing with the stop sale of nursery stock suspected of being infested or infected with plant pests. Until July 1, 1980, even though disease infection was suspected in some situations, no remedial action was allowed. This provision is significant as it offers both the purchasing nursery and consumer a degree of help in disallowing the sale of nursery stock that is unthrifty due to conditions not so readily identifiable.

Following his comments, Mr. Trammel introduced his co-worker Dr. D. J. Schweitzer, Plant Pathologist, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services who discussed *Root-Rot Organisms as they Affect Virginia Grown Boxwood*.

A summary of his remarks follows:

One of the major roles of the plant pathologist in the regulatory section of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is to train regulatory inspectors in nursery diseases. This is especially true in root-rotting diseases. The primary root pathogens of boxwood are *Phytophthora* spp. and *Paecilomyces buxi*.

Phytophthora root rot is a virulent pathogen of boxwood. The symptoms are a chlorosis of the foliage, reduction in foliage size, dieback, and discoloration of the cambium at the ground line. *Phy-*

tophthora is a soil-inhibiting fungus which usually infects boxwoods when they are stressed by other factors.

Paecilomyces buxi only infects English boxwoods and is known as boxwood decline. The symptoms are similar to *Phytophthora* infections. It is more commonly found in Northern Virginia.

To prevent these diseases, boxwoods should be kept in a thrifty condition by proper management, reducing stress to a minimum.

If a problem does exist care must be taken in submitting a plant sample for diagnosis. If at all possible, the entire plant should be taken for analysis.

Professor James A. Faiszt, Extension Specialist, Landscape Design for Virginia Tech discussed *Using Boxwood in Small Residential Landscapes*. His remarks will be carried in a future article in the *Boxwood Bulletin*.

The final speaker was Tom Ewert, Director of Blandly Experimental Farm, Boyce, Virginia who discussed *Propagating Boxwood from Cuttings*. In propagating boxwood, a piece of stem from a healthy boxwood is removed and treated in such a way as to encourage roots to grow so that the cutting can become a self sufficient plant. Two major factors stand in the way of successfully accomplishing this goal - desiccation or drying out, and decay. It is a normal function of the leaves to give off water to the air (transpiration). Since the cuttings do not have a root system to take in new supplies of water, the leaf tissue has a tendency to dry out, eventually killing the tissue. Therefore, one of the goals of successful propagation is to keep the leaf and stem tissue moist and healthy until a new root system has developed. The other factor, decay, is the result of too much moisture in the rooting media or on the cutting. When the cutting is kept too wet, it can rot. Therefore, good sanitation and careful control of temperature and humidity are important.

All of this is not as difficult as it may sound. The method which we have demonstrated at the Workshops sponsored by the American Boxwood Society is quite simple and can be used by anyone. Supplies are readily available with little or no expense. We use a "clear" plastic 1-gallon milk carton for a container. The top is cut off at a height of about 6" and a nail is used to put 3 or 4 small holes in the bottom to provide drainage. A 1-inch layer of gravel is placed in the container followed by 3 to 4 inches of rooting media. The media we use is a sharp sand, but a 50-50 mixture of sand and peat may be substituted, or you might like to experiment with other products such as vermiculite or perlite.

We use cuttings 6-8 inches long, removing the leaves from the bottom 2 inches of the stem. The bases of the cuttings are dipped into a rooting hormone (for example, #2 Hormodine or Rootone) and the cuttings are stuck into the media to a depth of 1-1/2 to 2 inches. After all the cuttings are in

the container, they are watered in well.

We then cover the container with a plastic bag just large enough to provide adequate space for the cuttings. Some type of support should be used to hold the plastic bag up off the cuttings. We usually leave the handle of the milk carton attached to the bottom to act as a support, but two small stakes, such as bamboo or dowel or a form made from a coat hanger can be used.

The covered container can then be set aside while the cuttings begin to root. Absence of moisture beads on the plastic may indicate a need for additional water. In any case, the bag should be removed every 3 to 4 weeks and the moisture checked to be sure it is adequately moist. Then replace the cover. Set the container in a bright location, but never in the sun, since this will cause the temperature within to rise creating an "oven" environment and killing the cuttings.

Test the cuttings for root formation by gently pulling them up from the media. Resistance indicates root development. When enough roots have formed (2 - 4 months in most cases) the new plants can be potted up and placed in a protected location to be "hardened off" for a few weeks before being planted out in the nursery or garden. (If the young plant is ready at a time when the winter season is approaching, it should be given a little extra protection the first year. Cover plants with straw or leaves or keep them in a cold frame until spring.)

At the close of Ewert's comments each participant had the opportunity to try his hand at propagating boxwood using the gallon plastic container and plastic bag method as sufficient equipment was on hand for everyone.

Special thanks are extended to Prof. James A. Faiszt of Virginia Tech for helping to arrange the program and to Extension Agents Ralph E. LaRue and Charles K. Curry for handling local arrangements.

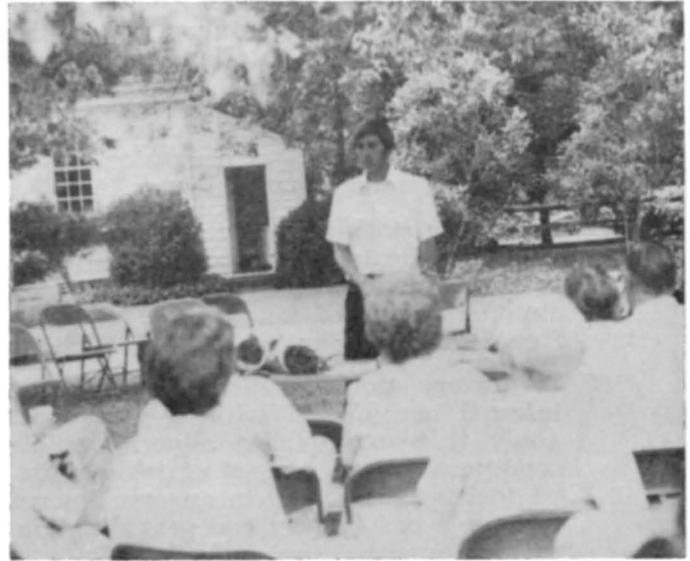


photo: Al Beecher
ABS Director Tom Ewert



photo: Al Beecher
Scotchtown Workshop



photo: Al Beecher
ABS Registrar Dr. Bernice Speese at Scotchtown



photo: Al Beecher
Scotchtown Workshop

WHO CAN TOP THE BOXWOOD AT TOSALMA?

Scot Butler

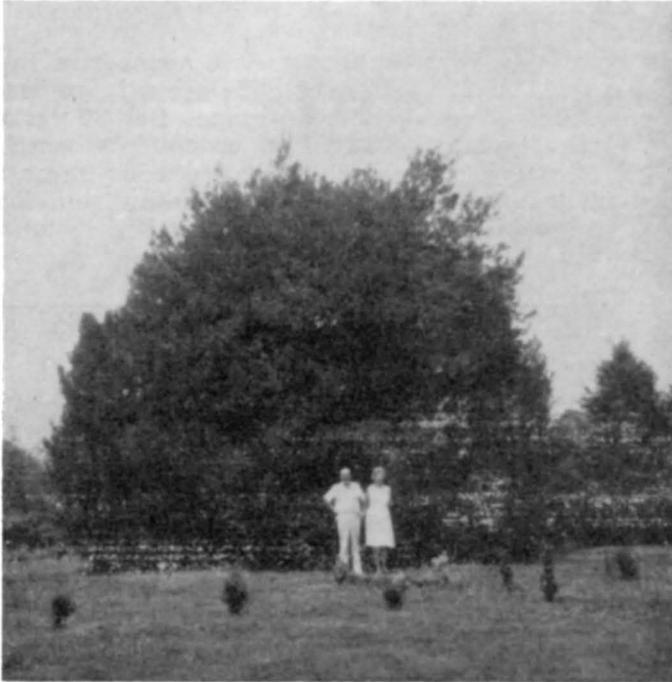


photo: Scot Butler
Colonel and Mrs. McCracken in front of ancient clump of Boxwood at "Tosalma"



photo: Scot Butler
Part of acrostic garden at "Tosalma"

Colonel and Mrs. Thomas McCracken live in a small early house in Hanover County, Virginia, not far from "Scotchtown," the home of Patrick Henry from 1771 to 1777 and the scene of our recent boxwood workshop. Quite some years ago the McCrackens named their farm of about 117 acres "Tosalma," an acronym formed from syllables in their first names, Tom and Emma, and that of their first daughter, Sally. The McCrackens jokingly say that "Tosalma is an old Indian word meaning 'too much labor' — and that if the Indians did not have such a word they should have." The McCrackens have many long ties with boxwood, including charter membership in the American Boxwood Society.

The impressive plantings in the yard surrounding the house are dominated by three towering clumps of *Buxus sempervirens* var. *arborescens* which are about 175 years of age. The largest of these clumps, consisting of eight multi-trunk plants in a circle, is about 26 feet in height and measures from 34 to 45 feet in breadth. Standing inside the clump one finds oneself in a boxwood bower, cool even on the hottest day and large enough to accommodate a picnic table. Viewed from the outside, however, the solid green mass appears to be one plant of gigantic proportions.

The trunks of these ancient *arborescens* measure some 10 inches or more in diameter at the base. The McCracken's son, Gus, a Life Member of ABS, made two gavelts from one of the branches broken

by Hurricane Hazel in the 1950's. The McCrackens presented one of these gavelts to the American Boxwood Society in 1973, where it has been the object of much interest and esteem as well as enjoying a useful role each year when the President calls the Annual Meeting to order.

In addition to the venerable *arborescens* growing in their natural form, the McCrackens have in their yard an interesting informal boxwood garden in the form of an acrostic, at once religious and patriotic, and featuring several varieties of boxwood. A circular bed centered on a figure of the Blessed Mother, Patron Saint of the United States, is composed of 50 *suffruticosa* around the outer edge, representing the present states of the Union, 13 *compacta* around the base of the figure, representing the original colonies and, superimposed on the circle, a five-pointed star outlined by 13 *koreana* along the side of each point, terminating in a gold-splashed *aurea*. Three smaller beds form the apexes of a triangle enclosing the circle: each bed contains boxwoods interwoven in the shapes of a cross, an anchor and a heart — symbolizing faith, hope and charity.

Colonel McCracken is currently building an even larger and more elaborate acrostic garden in the yard, designed with the early Christian "chi-rho" symbol as the axis.

In addition to developing an ornamental stone quarry located on the farm the McCrackens through the years have built up a sizable nursery

stock. Also they have collected and grown many fascinating plants, including several pine trees with variegated needles, two dogwoods with delicate silver-edged leaves, as well as other rare and specimen material for their own enjoyment. It is not surprising, considering their love of horticulture, that they should have planted hundreds of cuttings and seedlings in containers: boxwood, azaleas, hollies and rhododendron to name but a few. These now form an extensive nursery that stretches through acres of woodland. Some have grown quite large but there are great numbers of small plants, including several unusual and desirable varieties of boxwood. The McCrackens enjoy showing their unique plantings and home nursery to fellow members of the Society who write or call to make arrangements well in advance. We shall long remember the hospitable welcome we received and the interesting hours we spent at Tosalma.

In 1968 Colonel McCracken demonstrated his regard for the American Boxwood Society by donating two of his *aurea* boxwoods to Blandy. Now he suggests that the Society create a Memorial Fund — in addition to the Memorial Garden — for members who would like to be remembered in a way that would help strengthen and perpetuate the work of the Society. Indeed an idea worth exploring!

Biographical Note: Mr. Butler is a member of the ABS Board of Directors. He recently retired from U. S. Government service after 30 years as a specialist engaged in economic research and analysis. Mr. Butler combines his interest in growing boxwood with an enthusiasm for seeking out old stands of boxwood at historic sites.

The History and Use of Boxwood in Hanover County, Virginia

William R. Shelton

The history of boxwood in Hanover County, Virginia, perhaps should start at Williamsville, the Pollard home located near "Studley," the birthplace of Patrick Henry. Williamsville has some of the oldest boxwood in the County, having been planted between 1794 and 1800. Most of the boxwood are of the American tree variety. Some of these plants are over twenty-five feet tall. Williamsville is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Cabaniss.

"Hickory Hill," the Wickham home located near Hanover Court House, is the largest single tract of land in Hanover County, having over 3,000 acres. "Hickory Hill" also has the largest boxwood garden in the County and, I have been told, one of the largest boxwood hedges in the world. This boxwood, both the American and English varieties, was planted from 1820 to 1910, and was started from boxwood that came from "Shirley Plantation."

"Scotchtown" is one of the largest land grants in Hanover County and was the home of Patrick Henry for eight years. There are six boxwood plants at "Scotchtown" in front of the house, three American and three English, which, I have been told, are over two hundred years old.

The "Winston Cemetery" located on Blenheim Farm near "Hickory Hill" has three very large boxwood plants, two American and one English. The English boxwood is about eight feet tall; it is one of the largest English boxwoods that I have ever seen.

"Rural Plains" is the Shelton home which was built in 1670. It was here that Patrick Henry was married to Sarah Shelton in 1754. There are two

American Boxwood of the tree variety among the original boxwood planted at "Rural Plains." The other boxwood, both the English and American varieties, were planted by my father, W. R. Shelton, Sr.; they are over fifty years old. The English boxwood planted in 1929 at "Rural Plains" are said to be over 200 years old now.

I would like to take just a minute and go into the uses of boxwood. Boxwood is used for garden backgrounds. The English boxwood is used for edgings along walks and surrounding gardens. It is very slow growing and beautifully shaped. The American boxwood is used for hedging and for tall screening. Both varieties are used for foundation plantings.

The American tree boxwood was used more at one period. Now the bush type of the American variety is planted more.

Remember, when you buy your plants, boxwood is one of the "longest livers" of all plants. The beautiful boxwood will live for centuries.

Biographical Note: Mr. Shelton is a grower of boxwood. He is the owner of Rural Plains, believed to be the oldest home in Hanover County. It is also believed to be the oldest home in the United States in continuous possession of a male descendant of the original builder. Mr. Shelton is the ninth generation of Sheltons to own and occupy the home. The above remarks were delivered at the Scotchtown Boxwood Workshop held on July 9, 1980.

The Suffruticosa Mini-Farm

William A. Gray



photo: William A. Gray

A field with 3 x 4.5 foot spacing, before mowing. Plants at right are 'Memorial', all others *suffruticosa*

Starting and operating a small nursery for woody ornamental plants is a popular pastime. Such an activity can be attractive to an individual with a green thumb, time to spare, an independent income, and a small amount of land that could or should be made productive. The satisfaction of seeing things grow is important, but the ability to provide a desirable product of use to others may be a greater motivation.

The emphasis in this article is on the small operation. The small nursery farm is widespread in the industry and serves a useful function, particularly for specialized plant material. Of the 524 registered nurseries in Virginia as of January 1980, 235 were listed as one-acre establishments.¹

One can think of the nursery industry as being divided into two large groups: the producers (nursery farms) and the users (landscape nurserymen and garden centers). Both include large and small operations. In this context, products are woody ornamentals in four broad categories: rooted cuttings and liners, sold to growers; bare-rooted stock, mainly deciduous fast-growing items; container plants, now the principal source for evergreen ornamentals in the smaller sizes; and field-grown B&B material, the so-called "finished products" or "specimen plants". In my opinion, only this last category should be considered by the very small operator.

An industry survey for the Southern Region was conducted in 1965.^{2, 3} The data provided should be examined by anyone considering a nursery operation. For example, the types of plants produced in Virginia and North Carolina were distributed as follows:

Type of plant	Virginia	North Carolina
Broadleaf evergreen	58%	70%
Narrowleaf evergreen	19	14
Deciduous shrubs	14	9
Ornamental trees	9	7

For the broadleaf evergreens, the distribution by genus was:

Genus	Virginia	North Carolina
<i>Rhododendron</i>	61%	37%
<i>Ilex</i>	24	41
<i>Ligustrum</i>	5	6
<i>Buxus</i>	3	1
Others	7	15

1. Commonwealth of Virginia, Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. "Directory of
2. Smeal, Paul M. & Johnson, Joseph M. "Research Division Bulletin 21. Marketing Woody Ornamentals: Practices and Trends in Virginia." VPI & SU, Blacksburg, Va., August 1970.
3. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. Economic Research Service Bulletin ERS 420, "Marketing Woody Ornamentals: Practices and Trends in North Carolina." Washington, D.C., September 1969.

Nurserymen and Dealers Registered to Sell Nursery Stock in Virginia." Richmond, 1980.

Obviously, azaleas and hollies were, and still are, the big movers; the market for boxwood, although small by comparison, is significant. *Buxus sempervirens* var. *suffruticosa* (English Boxwood, hereafter referred to as *suffruticosa*) should offer a good opportunity to the small producer of field-grown specimen plants catering to a more select clientele. Competition from large producers is not likely to be overwhelming.

Before establishing the *suffruticosa* mini-farm, a few basic factors should be examined. Probably the first and most important matter is the need for irrigation water. A one-acre operation, with a net growing area of 35,000 square feet, will require about 30,000 gallons of water each week during a serious dry spell. One cannot afford to buy town water for this purpose; furthermore, it is likely to be restricted when most needed. Mountain streams and farm ponds, if fed mainly by run-off, are not a safe source. You will need your own drought-proof water source with a capacity flow of five to ten gallons/minute over the irrigating cycle.

Another obvious consideration is that of suitable soil. *Suffruticosa* tolerates a wide range of soils. Professional nurserymen often quote the doubtful myth that "you can grow anything anyplace if you know how." Nevertheless, there are limitations in both soil texture and topography for a trouble-free nursery field. The very heavy clay soils — those that cannot pass septic field percolation tests — should be avoided. At the other extreme, very coarse sandy soils are not desirable for a *suffruticosa* nursery, partly because the root ball is difficult to dig and to use in finer-textured soils.

Siting the nursery field is important. It should be reasonably accessible and not too far from the water supply. Never try to establish a *suffruticosa* field in a bottom or at the low point of rolling land; over time, excessive soil water and/or low winter temperatures will spell disaster. Avoid the unprotected brow of a ridge with a westerly or northerly exposure; the sweep of drying winter winds will compound the problems of desiccation damage.



photo: William A. Gray

Two boxwood production units, each of 2000 square feet. 'Vardar Valley' at left.

Laying out the nursery is largely a matter of individual choice. Keep in mind that several separate areas are required: the nursery fields, where stock is grown for future harvest as specimen plants; small beds or frames, where liners are held until they are large enough to set out in the field; probably some facility of your own preference for rooting cuttings; and unrelated working and storage areas. It would be wise to design the actual nursery fields as a number of small units of manageable size; a unit of 50 by 40 feet might be typical. Within each unit, plants should be spaced evenly to minimize damage from equipment. For ornamental shrubs, experienced nurserymen recommend a plant spacing of three feet in the row. Distance between rows can vary, depending on methods employed for weed control and harvesting. I believe three feet too close for easy working; a four and one-half foot distance between rows seems desirable.

This typical small field, 2,000 square feet in area and containing 135 plants, can be thought of as the basic production unit. It should be kept full, replanting with young stock, six inches or more in size. As a grower of specimen plants, you will not want to compete with relatively cheaper container-grown products. Hence, for *suffruticosa* you will plan to harvest plants that have been in the field between four and perhaps fifteen years. Theoretically, at an average life in the field of six to seven years, the annual yield for an established unit of this size would be in the order of twenty plants with a current market value of about \$300. A model one-acre *suffruticosa* nursery might comprise fifteen production units, totalling about 2,000 plants, with an eventual output of \$4,500/year.



photo: William A. Gray

A foundation planting with eastern exposure could be ideal for growing rooted cuttings.

There are three options for acquiring new field stock. The cheapest, but most time-consuming, is to root your own cuttings; this may be the only feasible approach for certain rare cultivars. After rooting, plants should be grown closely-spaced in a protected bed for two or three years to attain six-inch or larger root balls, then moved into the final product field. An alternative inexpensive approach is to purchase rooted cuttings or small liners from

the trade, if you can find a quality source. Again, these plants should be grown in a protected bed before moving into the field. Unless you are an enthusiastic plant propagator, purchasing container-grown stock in the six-inch (1-gallon) size from a producer specializing in *suffruticosa* may be the most expedient method; these products can be set out directly in the field.

An appropriate letterhead is probably the first paperwork action to take. If for no other reason, this helps when requesting trade catalogs and price data. You must register with and be inspected by your State's Department of Agriculture; this is a good bargain. The local Extension Agent can provide the address. I recommend this be done at an early date — once you have a few plants in the field — something to be inspected. If you sell only what you grow, you are a farmer, not a merchant, and will not be subject to business licensing or occupational tax. Later, if some customers are not exempt from sales tax, you will be required to obtain a license to collect the sales tax.

The referenced 1965 industry survey concluded that the three major problems in nursery operations were labor shortages, weather hazards, and weed control. For the very small grower, the labor problem can be minimized by limiting total plants in the field, scheduling work through the year so as to concentrate only on essentials during the busy period of April through June, and by recruiting part-time help during this busy period.

Hazards of weather cannot be avoided, but their impact on *suffruticosa* can be reduced by selecting optimum field locations, having adequate water for dry spells, good drainage for long wet periods, and by adhering to an appropriate fertilizing program.

Weed control is undoubtedly the most laborious and frustrating activity for a small producer of field-grown ornamentals. The ancient and traditional method of machine and manual cultivation is hard work, time consuming, unkind to our clay-bearing soils, and likely to damage too many specimen plants. The newer broad spectrum systemic herbicides may be worth the cost in preparing a new nursery field site. However, these (and all other effective herbicides) should never be used where *suffruticosa* is growing, regardless of recommended practices. Mulched beds, which must be hand-weeded and renewed annually, are fine for a limited space filled with small liners, but generally would not be feasible for large nursery fields.

After trying many approaches to weed control, I have concluded that mowing grass in the nursery field is the least of the various evils. A small riding mower plus a light-weight push mower are the basic tools. With KY-31 fescue as a cover, mowing every two weeks during the spring is satisfactory; about ten mowings a year are typical. A small circle of bark mulch is used at the time of planting, and renewed annually as needed; however, grass clippings provide the mulch for most plants in the field.



photo: William A. Gray

Major mowing done by riding mower, followed by push mower around plants.

Cultural practices vary to some extent with individual circumstances. However, certain principles should be observed when growing *suffruticosa* for the market. To promote maximum rate of growth and to avoid stress, water heavily during dry periods. Unless you have a limestone soil, spread dolomitic limestone annually; the winter is a convenient time. Fertilize annually in late winter or early spring; a light application (20 pounds per 1,000 square feet of 10-10-10) should be adequate. If a second feeding seems needed, I suggest less nitrogen (5-10-10, perhaps); this should be applied before July. Avoid nitrogen feeding in the fall.

Be sure to clean out all plants annually. To remove accumulations of dead leaves and other debris, a thorough washing of the interior in June, using a pistol-grip nozzle, is a convenient method. At this time, pluck any twigs that have suffered severe winter damage. Older plants will benefit from occasional pruning to thin out overcrowded structures.

In the *suffruticosa* nursery, the first and most important step in pest control is that of diagnosis. One must determine whether a problem is caused by insect pests, cultural factors, or disease — keeping in mind that the latter two are apt to be inter-related. The most frequent cultural problem is likely to be winter damage. Insect damage to *suffruticosa* should not be a major issue; control by a recommended systemic insecticide is effective when directed specifically against the problem plants and pests. The likelihood of disease is avoided by adhering to good cultural practices and eliminating stress on the plants; at this time, the only possible remedy would appear to be drastic pruning.

Biographical Note: Mr. Gray is no stranger to readers of the *Boxwood Bulletin*, having contributed a number of articles in the past. Since his retirement from U. S. Government service in 1969, Mr. Gray has been active as a nurseryman, gardener, and consultant in the field of electron device technology. He first entered

In closing, I offer a bit of advice. Don't be overly ambitious in the beginning. A few hundred nursery plants would be more satisfying than several thousand at this stage. Avoid too much variety, concentrating on types you know intimately; there is no valid reason for a small producer to offer a wide spectrum of landscape material. Do not worry about merchandising. Harvesting for the market will be some years in the future; by that time you should have developed adequate customer relations. Customers generally would include landscape nurserymen, institutions with ground-keeping staffs, and a somewhat selective group of homeowners within a radius of about one hundred miles.

the nursery business in 1968 when he bought a home on Mason Neck, Fairfax County, Virginia and inherited with it some 6,500 *suffruticosa* plants. At present he is a small-scale grower of woody ornamentals — including *suffruticosa* — at his Brecknock Nursery west of Charlottesville, Virginia.

Mr. Chingos Offers A Market For Boxwood Clippings

Mr. Theodore G. Chingos, a member of the American Boxwood Society, recently wrote to Director Tom Ewert inviting owners of English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* var. *suffruticosa*) to send 8" to 15" clippings to him for commercial use. In his sixty years of experience Mr. Chingos has developed a successful technique for cutting *suffruticosa* and a deep appreciation for the many decorative uses of the clippings. He writes as follows:

"We have cut over two million pounds of boxwood. We have never lost a boxwood hedge. We always thin out the bush by cutting the boxwood as one would thin out a heavy crop of hair. Some years the boxwood has a heavy growth, and the crop is heavier. Other years the growth is poorer and we do not cut the hedge. This gives the box a chance for healthier growth."

Mr. Chingos recommends that growers thin the hedge out from the inside by reasonable clipping of stems 8" to 15" long. This allows the air to circulate and the sun and water to penetrate. The boxwood can be thinned any time during the year except during the growing period, he writes. Mr. Chingos' firm buys over 30,000 pounds of clippings in October and November to keep in cold storage until June.

In his letter Mr. Chingos sings the praise of the decorative qualities of boxwood:

"English boxwood is the aristocrat of all decorative evergreens. It has been used extensively since the days of Williamsburg. It is a beautiful green and can be put to many commercial uses. We have made Victorian wreaths (with whiskers), roping, centerpieces with red alder berries, and the like. It is used not only at Christmas but all during the year."

For boxwood growers seriously interested in selling their clippings commercially to Mr. Chingos, please write to him at 818-820 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10001. He recommends that when thinning a boxwood hedge the cuttings always be placed on the shady side of the hedge, never in the sun. He also recommends that shippers obtain three cartons so that they can pack up to one hundred pounds of clippings.

In concluding his letter Mr. Chingos urges: "Never throw box clippings away. After you cut them give them to a friend, or to a hospital, or to whomever you like. Boxwood makes a fine decoration especially in winter when flowers are expensive."

HISTORY IN A SIX FOOT CIRCLE

JAMES C. WILFONG



photo: James C. Wilfong

These Boxwood were slipped in a high rise apartment.

In October, 1945, Ambassador David K. E. Bruce placed His Lordship's Kindness in Washington's Maryland suburbs on the market and curiosity led us to visit it. We can measure our interest in English boxwood extending from this time. These great billowing green bushes, aromatic in the extreme, set our imagination racing and we have indulged our natural curiosity for some 35 years now. Along the way we acquired some volumes treating of the subject and it pleased in the extreme to find that books had been written on a subject on which nature alone had dictated firm edicts. Chief among these was the cautionary note that one does not trim his boxwood.

A generation of desultory travel brought some superb examples of these glorious bushes to our attention. As a resident of the Washington area, access to the Tidewater region was not difficult. The Guides of the Federal Writers Project were helpful in the extreme and our Guide to The Old Dominion in time took us to Castle Hill. We knew at once that reference to box hedge 40 feet high had to apply to American, not English box, but we recommend the visit to this Charlottesville area to one and all. American box should not be dismissed too lightly.

In time the thought occurred that these magnificent bushes deserved to be perpetuated for the next 300 years. Just as someone had looked out for our best interests three centuries ago. Why

not slip these outstanding horticultural miracles and see if fortune might smile on us, as it had upon our ancestors, so many generations earlier?

All well and good, but we lived in a high rise apartment. Where to pursue our experiment in longevity? Flower pots are readily available anywhere and we had some. In the ensuing months, we made the most of them. A four inch slip of box from Old Trinity St. Paul's in Kent, Bostwick in Bladensburg, Melwood Park, west of Marlboro, The Old Mansion in the Northern Neck and a dozen others soon occupied our attentions on a weekly basis. We watered them faithfully and in looking back, we did not lose a one. In five or six brief years our slips of four or five inches have reached a height of 12 or more and each displays a billowing waistband to send the spirits soaring once again.

Retirement brought a removal from an urban highrise to a rural existence on the bank of the Pautuxent. Our orphans are progressing magnificently and they now circle a sun dial which rarely draws a second glance. Those little green bushes, though — they're real conversation pieces. We just wish, now, that we had labeled Gunston Hall's and Montpelier's and that of His Lordship's Kindness. Somehow, they each have a sameness in their appearance, but it can be summed up very simply: They're all great.

Breaking Boxwood For Beauty And Profit

John Boyd

Breaking or clipping is not a new thing, it has been going on for a long time. The clippings are used by the florist for ropes, laurels, wreaths, backing and filler.

I started in this business in 1930 or 1931 and my job at that time was to pick up the pieces that someone else had broken (we never clip boxwood plants.) At that time we put 50 pounds in a bag — today we put 25 pounds in a box. Of course my time as a child was limited by school, but every Saturday and every holiday from October 1 to December 15, I was expected to do what I could.

My father had used this as a hobby and had never tried to enlarge the business; around 1967 I decided either to discontinue or enlarge. Today I break boxwood in an area bounded by Lynchburg and Amelia, Virginia, down to Henderson and Greensboro, North Carolina. This area plus the plants that we have on the home farm at Alton, Virginia, and the boxwood at Belleview Plantation are all we can handle. We have shipped boxwood to every state east of the Mississippi except Maine and Florida, and as far west as Robbins, Colorado and Fargo, North Dakota. We have also shipped to Canada. It is not necessary to advertise, since word spreads the business each year. We hire pick-up labor to help and we are planting more plants every year. At the present time we have nearly 20,000 plants, most of them small.

I have planted *Buxus sempervirens*, which we will call tree box, and *Buxus sempervirens* var. *suffruticosa*, which we speak of as dwarf box. The tree type is planted in rows sixteen feet apart and the plants are ten feet apart in the row. The dwarf rows are twelve feet apart and the plants are six feet apart in the row. Plants are broken every three or four years, depending on the amount of growth. We try to use 800 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per acre and try to keep the pH high — 6.5 to 7. We use Malathion 50, Diazinon and di-syston on all the plants as needed. I do not believe you can find boxwood more vigorous than those around my home. Most boxwood are not nearly as healthy as ours.

Pruning or breaking should always have a purpose. In other people's gardens or yards I have to break according to their desires, but if you keep

in mind the width of a walk or the height of a window sill, it will give you an idea of what to do as well as how it should be done. Breaking part of the foliage out under a window and later, after this plant puts out new growth, breaking out the longer pieces that you left earlier will keep the box at a given height and never allow your window to be covered. As an example of what will otherwise happen, there are dwarf plants at Reidsville, North Carolina, that were allowed to grow without pruning, and I have to use a 10-foot ladder to break out the tops. The tree type box if allowed to go will get to be 25 feet or more, and when this happens the plants are not pretty. The dwarf box if not thinned tends to bend over and break in a snow. It makes a tremendous difference if boxwood is pruned. What we do is profitable for us and for the people whose plants we prune. They get paid to have their plants pruned and thinned, since we pay them for the clippings. This is proving to be a good farm money crop. The only problem is the time that it takes to get the crop established. I might mention here that locust trees planted in the rows will enhance the growth and color of the boxwood.

I have several thousand small plants 8 to 10 inches tall planted in rows 2 feet apart and 6 to 8 inches apart in the row. These plants will be left until they touch, at which time they will be thinned and replanted. After these plants reach fifteen inches they will be set in the field for a farm crop. Dwarf plants should be about twenty years old before being broken commercially; tree type, twelve years old. Naturally, the larger the plant the more clippings for sale. We try to stop our trees' growth at ten to twelve feet; beyond that height the tops are not usually pretty or saleable.

Biographical Note: Mr. Boyd was born in Wise County, Virginia and grew up in South Boston, Halifax County, Virginia. He attended the University of Virginia. Since 1945 Mr. Boyd has lived on the family farm — Long Branch Farm — at Alton, Halifax County, Virginia. While attending the ABS Annual Meeting we learned of Mr. Boyd's business and prevailed on him to prepare the interesting account printed above.

Secretary of The American Boxwood Society



Dayton S.Mak

Dayton S. Mak was elected Secretary of the American Boxwood Society at the 1980 annual meeting.

Mr. Mak, a retired Foreign Service Officer, holds a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the University of Arizona (1939) and an M.A. degree in International Relations from George Washington University (1964). He has also studied at the Naval War College in Newport and the University of Pennsylvania.

After a five-year term of overseas service with the U. S. Army in World War II, he joined the Department of State in 1946. From 1948 on, all his assignments were in or related to the Middle East. He has served in the American Embassies or Legations in Jeddah, Tripoli and London.

From 1957 to 1961 he was at the Department of State as Libyan Desk Officer and later Staff

Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. He returned to overseas duty as Charge d'Affaires in Kuwait and Head of Political Section, later Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission, American Embassy, in Beirut.

In 1969-1970 he was Faculty Advisor at the National War College in Washington and in 1970-71 he became Director, Office of Research and Analysis, Bureau of Intelligence and Research for the Near East.

From 1971 to 1973 he was in private business and in 1974 joined the staff of the Middle East Institute as Economic Consultant, a position which he held until 1976. He is currently Chairman of the Board of American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), and a Member of the Board of Governors of The Middle East Institute. ✓

THE HIGH COST OF
REPLACEMENT BOXWOODS

Albert S. Beecher

Boxwoods are often used in a parterre garden and the effectiveness of the design is seriously imperiled when plants are unhealthy or die. In order to restore the original pattern, replacement plants are needed, but to find plants of the same variety and size may be difficult. It also may come as a severe shock to learn what new plants will cost.

One way to avoid the high cost of purchasing plants is to grow your own. Locate a site at the edge of the vegetable garden or in an isolated area on the property where the plants are not part of the overall landscape composition. For best results seek a location where the soil is fertile and there is adequate soil drainage and protection from the wind.

If possible try to have replacement plants that are approximately the same size and the same variety as the ones growing in the parterre garden. When a new formal pattern garden is being established, purchase a few extra plants and place them in the replacement nursery. However if the garden is already established, it may take several years before plants of a suitable size can be grown and be ready to use. This will especially be true if plants are obtained from cuttings. Time can be gained if small or medium size plants are purchased.

Keep in mind if your garden has been properly designed and maintained, you may never want to change the design pattern. However with a replacement nursery you will have plants available if needed.

A nursery area can also be used for renovating plants that are removed from a garden because they are in poor condition. With care it may be possible to rejuvenate such plants. When moving boxwoods to the replacement nursery, reduce some of the top growth by doing a careful thinning of the upper portion of the plant. Be sure to water during dry periods. An early application of fertilizer in the spring after the plants have been established will be beneficial. In time these plants may recover and can be used again in the landscape composition.

To obtain plants for the replacement nursery you can propagate plants from cuttings of your own plants. If you have never propagated boxwood, you will not find it difficult, and in fact you will experience the joy of growing your own plants. For details on boxwood propagation, read the article by Thomas E. Ewert published in the April 1979 issue of the *Boxwood Bulletin*. The other alternative is to buy small plants if you are not interested in propagating.

By planning ahead you will have replacement plants if they are needed at less cost, and the appearance of your parterre garden will always be in fine condition.

21st Annual Meeting

The American Boxwood Society

May 13, 1981

at

Blandy Experimental Farm

Boyce, Virginia



The Bulletin Committee wishes to express appreciation to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission for providing the two reports of the National Park Service cited in Historical Sketch of Scotchtown.

The Editor wishes to acknowledge belatedly the kind permission of the BULLETIN, National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs, to reprint the article, "The Sweet Smell of Success" by Doris Thain Frost, an excerpt of which appeared in the July 1980 issue of *The Boxwood Bulletin*.

THE AMERICAN BOXWOOD SOCIETY

INFORMATION

Address: Box 85, Boyce, Virginia 22620

DUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Regular membership dues of The American Boxwood Society are now \$5.00. This includes a subscription to *The Boxwood Bulletin*.

Non-member subscriptions are for groups and institutions such as botanic gardens, libraries, etc. These are \$6.00 a year, and run by the calendar year.

The Boxwood Society year runs from one Annual Meeting to the next; from May of one year to May of the next year. Those joining the Society at other times are sent all the *Boxwood Bulletin* issues for the current Society year, beginning with the July number. Their dues are then again due and payable in the following May. This was voted by the Society in order to lighten as far as possible the heavy work load of our busy Treasurer.

At the present time any or all *Bulletins* are available, back to Vol. 1, No. 1 (Vol. 1 consists of three issues only, there was no Vol. 1, No. 4.) Price per single copy is \$1.50.

Besides regular membership dues at \$5.00 per year, there are other classes of membership available: Contributing, \$10.00; Sustaining, \$25.00; Life, \$100.00; and Patron, \$500.00.

Gift memberships are announced to the recipients by boxwood-decorated cards which carry the information that *The Boxwood Bulletin* will come as your gift four times a year.

Members of The American Boxwood Society are reminded of the 1968 IRS decision that contributions to and for the use of the Society, are deductible by donors as provided in Section 170 of the Code.

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

If your letter is concerned with

- Membership, new or renewal
- Payment of dues
- Donations to research programs
- Change of address
- Gift Membership
- Ordering back issues of the *Bulletin*
- Ordering Dr. Wagenknecht's List

Write to:

Mrs. Thomas E. Ewert
American Boxwood Society
Box 85
Boyce, Virginia 22620

If your letter is concerned with:

General information about the Society

Advice concerning boxwood problems or cultural information

Boxwood selection

Albert S. Beecher, President

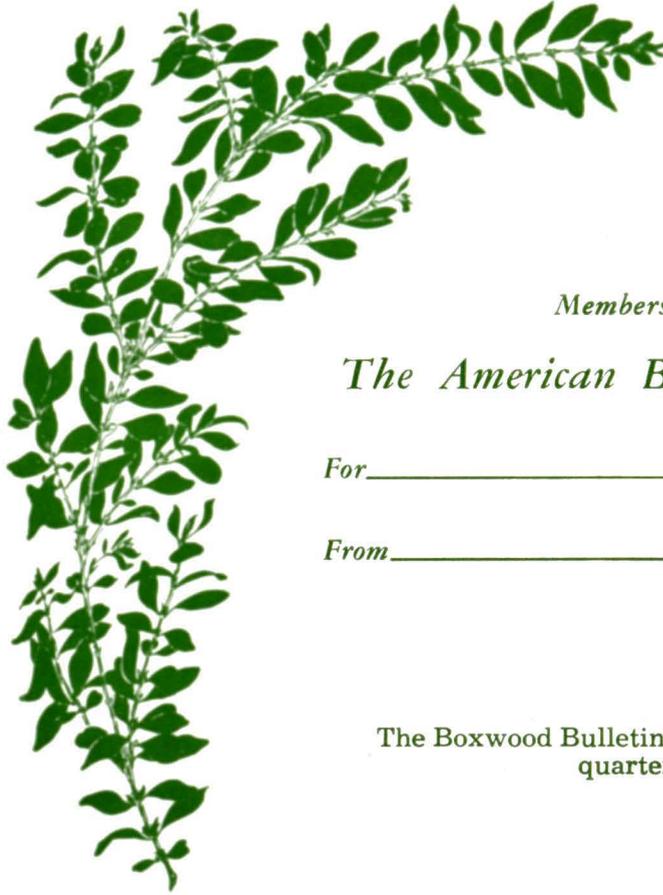
In some cases depending upon the nature of your request, your letter may be forwarded to a member of the Board or another appropriate member who can provide the help you have requested.

You are also welcome to write direct to the President of the American Boxwood Society:

Professor Albert S. Beecher
807 Sunrise Drive, S.E.
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

If you have contributions for the *Boxwood Bulletin* - articles, news notes, photographs, suggestions of anything of probable interest to boxwood people, it saves time to direct them to the Editor:

Mrs. Charles H. Dick, Editor
The *Boxwood Bulletin*
514 Amherst Street
Winchester, Virginia 22601



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If you are looking for a gift for a friend, why not give a membership in the American Boxwood Society. During the year, they will receive four issues of the *Boxwood Bulletin*.

Above you see a reproduction of our gift card just as it would go to one of your friends announcing your gift membership. The cost is \$5.00 for one year and \$10.00 for two years. Send your gift request to the Treasurer, Mrs. Thomas Ewert, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, Virginia 22620.