

The *Boxwood* Bulletin

A Quarterly Devoted to Man's Oldest Garden Ornamental



Brick-walled entrance to the new Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden. See article on page 23. (Photo: Lynn R. Batdorf)

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The Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden

New Boxwood Showplace at Missouri Botanical Garden

Lynn Batdorf and Dan Moses

The Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis has a new, major boxwood garden. This 1.6 acre, formal boxwood garden presents an exciting contemporary garden reminiscent of the parterres found in Italian and French gardens in the sixteenth & seventeenth centuries. Dedicated on June 11, 1996, it dramatically illustrates how boxwood can not only survive but flourish in the occasionally harsh St. Louis climate. This boxwood garden was funded by and is named for Ruth Palmer Blanke.

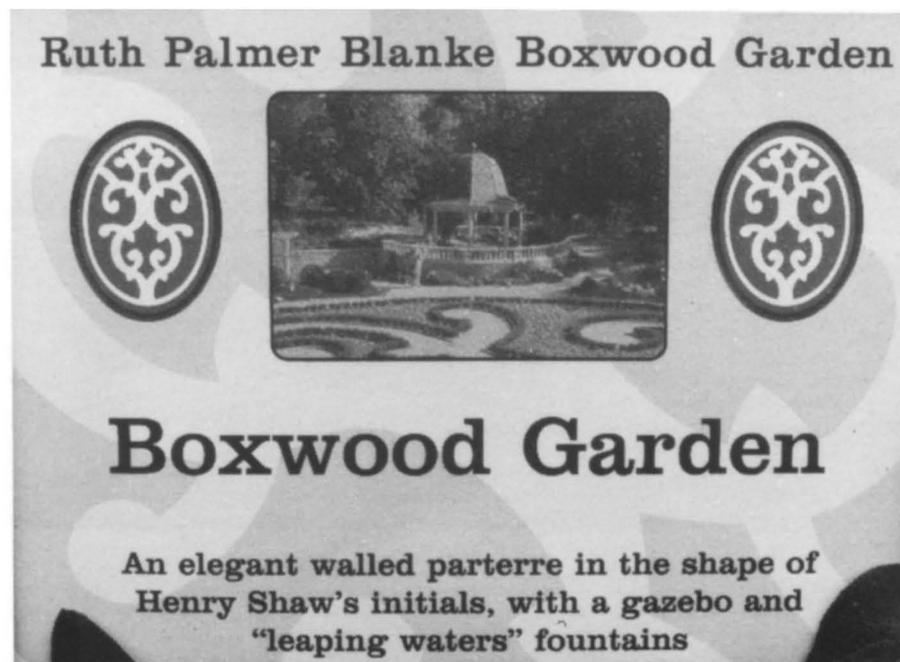
Upon approaching the garden, a large, high-walled circular entrance greets visitors. Inside is a small stone pedestal in a fountain. From early spring to late fall, the pedestal holds a *Buxus microphylla* 'Compacta' bonsai. On either side of the fountain is a large, round window, which allows the first view of the boxwood garden. Around the inside perimeter of the walled entrance is a low hedge of *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'Wintergreen'. In the center of this area is a large metal medallion. Inscribed is the name of the garden and in French, "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*" which translates to "We must cultivate our garden," taken from Voltaire's *Candide*.

From this entrance area is a path planted with a rich selection of herbaceous companion plants designed to offer an exciting four-season display. The path has a brick wall which defines the outside edge of the garden. The inside edge has a well-designed wood lattice, offering generous views into the garden.

After strolling down this path, there is a break in the wood lattice that gives an opportunity to view the entire garden for the first time. At this



Upon entering the Missouri Botanical Garden, signs clearly show the way to the new Boxwood Garden. (Photos: Lynn R. Batdorf)



Sign at the entrance of the Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden.

point the tour can continue in any of three directions.

One choice is to continue straight ahead. There are more companion plants along the path which leads to the gazebo, where there are benches for seating. From this raised perspective one has a view of the wonderfully designed and beautifully maintained boxwood parterre. This is also a popular wedding site that creates a dramatic and formal backdrop for photographers.

A second choice provides an entrance to the Edgar Anderson Boxwood Memorial. This area is quite unique and particularly interesting. It is devoted to preserving and displaying boxwood from the Balkans suitable for the difficult climate of the midwestern United States. The Missouri Botanical Garden is well



A medallion in the center of the entrance contains a quotation from Voltaire's Candide: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."



The outer perimeter wall defining the garden. Straight ahead is the entrance to the garden, to the left is the main display, to the right is the Edgar Anderson Boxwood Memorial, and below, the path continues to the gazebo.



View of center axis of the garden.



Raised gazebo at the end of the garden.



The full garden from left to right is visible from the gazebo.

known for its visitor services and garden displays that include excellent information and signs. This area has three signs. The first answers the question "What is a boxwood?"; the second explains why Dr. Anderson collected boxwood in the Balkans; and the third explains how the Boxwood Study Group and the Boxwood Society of the Midwest selected boxwood for the St. Louis area.

The final choice leads into the large oval center of the garden, which has a bilateral planting scheme. That is, all the boxwood and companion plant materials are planted in a mirror image. The tightly planted parterre is *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'Wintergreen', which is pruned to maintain a height of only 18 inches. The parterre dominates the area with its beautiful effect. To complement this effect, the perimeter has a rich variety of herbaceous and woody plant material. A few of the more noteworthy companion plants are *Stachys* 'Helen Von Stein', *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle', *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red', *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata* 'Elegans', and *Caryopteris clandonensis* 'Azure'. There is an

attractive water feature known as the "leaping waters." Visible from throughout the garden, there are three complete and separate jumps that are synchronized between two separate fountains. The water appears to leap from one section of the garden to another.

Lynn R. Batdorf is Curator of the National Boxwood Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. and International Registrar for Boxwood.

Dan Moses is the Horticulturist and curator of The Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis.

An inventory of the boxwood in the garden:

- Buxus microphylla* 'Compacta'
- B. microphylla* 'Curly Locks'
- B. microphylla* 'Green Pillow'
- B. microphylla* 'John Baldwin'
- B. microphylla* var. *japonica*
- B. microphylla* var. *japonica* 'Morris Midget'
- B. sempervirens* 'Aristocrat'
- B. sempervirens* 'Belleville'
- B. sempervirens* 'Handsworthii'
- B. sempervirens* 'Henry Shaw'
- B. sempervirens* 'Hermann von Schrenk'
- B. sempervirens* 'Hood'
- B. sempervirens* 'Inglis'
- B. sempervirens* 'Joy'
- B. sempervirens* 'Mary Gamble'
- B. sempervirens* 'Pendula'
- B. sempervirens* 'Pyramidalis Hardwickensis'
- B. sempervirens* 'Rotundifolia'
- B. sempervirens* 'Salicifolia'
- B. sempervirens* 'Ste. Genevieve'
- B. sempervirens* 'Vardar Valley'
- B. sempervirens* 'Zehlung'
- B. sinica* var. *insularis*
- B. sinica* var. *insularis* 'Wintergreen'
- B.* 'Green Velvet'



Left-to-right view of garden, continued.

Boxwood - genus *Buxus* (family *Buxaceae*)

What is boxwood?

Boxwoods are evergreen shrubs or small trees with inconspicuous flowers. The 60 to 70 species in the genus are found in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. They get their name from the ancient Greeks and Romans, who made exquisite small boxes from the wood of one species from the Mediterranean region. Enthusiasts consider boxwoods to be the oldest of garden ornamentals, valued for centuries for their elegant appearance and evergreen foliage. All of our cultivated varieties of boxwood are derived from a few hardy European and Asian species.

As a result of horticultural selection, boxwood plants are available in many shapes and sizes, making them useful in a variety of landscape settings. Elegant displays of boxwoods can be seen in the Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden and in the Edgar Anderson Boxwood Memorial.

The Balkan Connection

Why go to the Balkans to look for boxwood?

Edgar Anderson (1897-1969) had a goal to introduce strains of boxwood and other plants that would grow well in the sometimes harsh and uncertain climatic conditions of the midwestern United States. After studying world climates, he decided that the Balkans had a climate comparable to this part of North America. In 1934 he visited the Balkans and obtained seeds and cuttings from which many cultivated varieties were derived, including 'Agram', 'Edgar Anderson', 'Nish', and 'Vardar Valley'.

Edgar Anderson's work with boxwoods was just one of the many facets of his long association with the Missouri Botanical Garden. He earned an international reputation for his botanical work on the origin and evolution of corn and other grasses. He was a dedicated teacher, imparting his botanical knowledge to others. In his later years, he was the director of the botanical garden from 1954 to 1958.

Boxwoods in the Midwest

Can we really grow boxwoods in this part of the country?

Dr. Edgar Anderson, an authority on boxwoods, had a keen interest in this question. He admired boxwoods and their "simplicity and gentility" and wanted to find strains hardy in our area. His enthusiasm for boxwoods attracted a group of like-minded people who also found this question intriguing. First to look into this was the St. Louis Herb Society, a group that Dr. Anderson helped organize in 1941. Since 1969, the St. Louis Herb Society's Boxwood Study Group and its successor, the Boxwood Society of the Midwest, have been searching for strains of boxwood that will withstand our hot summers and cold winters. They have tested many cultivated varieties ("cultivars"). Through patience and diligence, they have shown that a number of these are suitable for our region.

With proper selection and care, Midwesterners now know that boxwoods have a place in our gardens and landscapes. Dr. Anderson would be proud of the achievement of the Boxwood Study Group and of the Boxwood Society of the Midwest.

These three well-written sign panels offer detailed information to visitors.

Buxus harlandii

A Brief History, Recent Observations and Recommendations

Henry F. Frierson, Jr., M. D.

Buxus harlandii is an exceptional boxwood for gardens in the lower Southeast, and also performs well in portions of Virginia and Maryland and in the District of Columbia. Its great potential for use in the landscape has been promoted only rarely. This article is a naked apology for this boxwood species.

A Synoptic History

In 1858, H. F. Hance, a British botanist, discovered the species in Hong Kong, and years later named it in memory of his friend and co-discoverer Dr. Harland (1). E. H. Wilson in 1908 brought *B. harlandii* to Arnold Arboretum in Boston, after finding it in the Hupeh province of China (2). Henry Hohman grew *B. harlandii* at his Kingsville Nursery, and Dr. John T. Baldwin, Jr., in 1952 obtained from him the flat-top clone for the gardens at the College of William and Mary (3). The vase-shaped clone was obtained by Dr. Baldwin from Kew Gardens (3).

The horticultural attributes of *B. harlandii* were long recognized by Dr. Baldwin, who, for over a decade, favorably commented on the species in several issues of *The Boxwood Bulletin*. In 1963, he wrote that, "*B. harlandii* is a most effective plant with us. They are very striking plants that excite the interest of those in search of new landscape materials" (4). In 1967, he commented that, "it is an extremely horticultural subject and should be used much more extensively than it is at present" (3). He also noted its ease of propagation, but was uncertain of its hardiness limits. Five years later, Dr. Baldwin remarked that, "I have for years recommended this as one of the best boxwoods for the South, because it keeps such a



Figure 1. The vase-shaped clone of B. harlandii was installed in 1967 at the home of Mr. James Moss in Calhoun County, South Carolina.



Figure 2. The planting of B. harlandii as an edging box around the Moss home is extensive and formal. (Photos: Henry F. Frierson, Jr.)

green color throughout the year" (5). Finally, in 1974, in reference to the vase-shaped clone, he stated, "it should be widely used in much of the

South" (6). More recently, *B. harlandii* has been described in more detail by Lynn Batdorf and P. D. Larson (2, 7-9).

Clonal Characteristics

The three clones of *B. harlandii* include: 1) a vase-shaped form; 2) a flat-top form; and, 3) 'Richard'. 'Richard', discovered in 1949 as a mutation at Straughn Nursery in Louisiana, has broad leaves with a deep "V" notch at the tip (2). It has the least potential of the three clones, as it is in limited supply, but, more importantly, is not cold tolerant, and may only be hardy in Zone 9 (2).

The vase-shaped clone of *B. harlandii* has a shallow notched tip and somewhat shorter leaves than the flat-top clone. The vase-shaped plants do not appear to regularly suffer from frost-pruning, which results in the distinctive habit of the flat-top clone. New growth of the flat-top clone is produced perhaps earlier than any other cultivated boxwood, and the tops but usually not the lateral shoots are often frost-pruned in more northern parts of the South. In warmer parts of the region, the plant is not exposed to late frosts, and consequently grows in a more upright form. The long slender leaves of the flat-top clone measure up to 2 inches in length. It is more often floriferous and fruiting than the vase-shaped clone which does so rarely or not at all. Both clones provide extremely lush, dense growth.

Use in Southeastern Gardens

B. harlandii is effective as a specimen plant, around foundations, as an edging boxwood, and in groups for area separation (9). It has been used sparingly in the American landscape, however. In the Middle Atlantic region, examples can be found in Tidewater, Central and Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and eastern Maryland. The species can be seen in only a few locations, however, and, when observed, only a few plants are typically present. This author has not visited gardens in the deep South, but would like to learn of the plant's



Figure 3. In 1963, the vase-shaped clone was planted as edging box at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Henry F. Frierson, Sr., of Orangeburg, South Carolina.



Figure 4. These 35-year-old vase-shaped clones provide a neat edge around a planting of *Camellia sasanqua* at the Frierson home.

distribution in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Buxus harlandii is found in limited plantings in the South Carolina low country, where it thrives as an exceptional plant. Both the vase-shaped and flat-top clones can be seen

in Carolina gardens, but the former appears more often than the latter.

The vase-shaped cultivar has been used in a few gardens in the Carolina low country as an edging box – a substitute for *B. sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' which poorly tolerates

the Carolina heat, humidity, and mites. The planting of *B. harlandii* as an edging box has proven to be quite successful and can only be recommended with great enthusiasm. Cultivars of *B. microphylla* var. *japonica* perform well in the low country as an edging box but, in my opinion, have a less formal and stately appearance than *B. harlandii*.

The origin of the use of *B. harlandii* as edging box in coastal South Carolina can be traced, at least in part, to noted landscape architect Robert Marvin of Walterboro, South Carolina and the late landscaper Fairey Prickett of St. Matthews, South Carolina. They chiefly used it in the 1960s for newly constructed homes built in the colonial revival style. This author is aware of a half a dozen homes that have adapted the species in their landscapes.

B. harlandii has proven to be ideal in the Carolina setting, as it suffers little from the hot, humid climate, and is resistant to most pests and diseases. I have only seen minor mite damage to a few plants, and they are resistant to leaf miner and psyllid. The edging of Harland boxwood has been maintained by spring or early summer pruning, or even shearing. Little other maintenance has been required. Edging box that are 30 to 35 years old that I have examined range from 24 to 42 inches in height and 14 to 30 inches in width (figs. 1-4). Left alone the plants would grow to six feet at maturity. The two forms of *B. harlandii* have also been used as specimen plants, left to develop in their natural forms without shearing (fig. 5).

Few cultivars of boxwood rival *B. harlandii* in effectiveness in the Carolina low country. Nevertheless, these plants have been little used along the coast, and cannot be found to any significant degree in historic coastal towns such as Charleston or Georgetown. Observations of *B.*



Figure 5. *B. harlandii* is quite effective as a specimen plant in the landscape.



Figure 6. This small garden behind the 1772 Heyward-Washington House is another example of the use of the Harland boxwood in the South. The parterres are edged with *B. harlandii* and the boxwoods trimmed into ball shapes are *B. microphylla* var. *japonica*. The Washington name is included because Heyward, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, leased the property to George Washington when he visited Charleston in 1791. (1997 photo: Decca G. Frackelton)

harlandii in South Carolina have led me to conclude that had the plant been described centuries ago and introduced into coastal South Carolina in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, it would have achieved status as an important historic plant—indeed, a plant for the coastal South as “royal” as ‘*Suffruticosa*’ in Virginia and Maryland.

Summary

Except for a period in the 1950s and 1960s in a few arboreta and private gardens in the upper south and areas of the South Carolina low country, *B. harlandii* has largely been neglected in the landscape of the Mid-Atlantic and Coastal South. Dr. John Baldwin’s enthusiastic support for the species in the 1960s and 1970s was chiefly ignored, and has long been forgotten. It is clear, however,

that with four decades of growth in gardens where they have been planted, the vase-shaped and flat-top clones can be enthusiastically recommended as exceptional boxwood cultivars.

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Garden Maze at the Missouri Botanical Garden

by Lynn R. Batdorf

A delightful air of romance and mystery surrounds the whole subject of garden mazes. The maze constructed of living plants, shaped into hedges, is the type which many of us have seen first-hand. It is generally believed to be a survivor of a romantic age, even though it seems to serve no other function than as a playground for children. The notion of using a garden maze for a lovers’ rendezvous is rich in literature and enchanting to nearly every couple.

There is little difference between a maze and a labyrinth. Both have an intricate, usually confusing network of pathways intended to make it difficult to find one’s way. A maze is constructed with live plants pruned into hedges, while labyrinth is made with stone, wood, or other building materials. Because few understand the difference both terms, maze and labyrinth, are generally used interchangeably.

At first there were labyrinths. These were constructed in ancient Egypt and Crete. They were later adopted by the Christian Church in the Middle Ages. Still later, and perhaps more importantly, the design evolved into a medium of horticultural delight when live hedge plants, were used to construct the maze. Interesting mathematical principles were developed, which establish the design, construction, and consequently the solution (the center or resulting exit) of the maze.

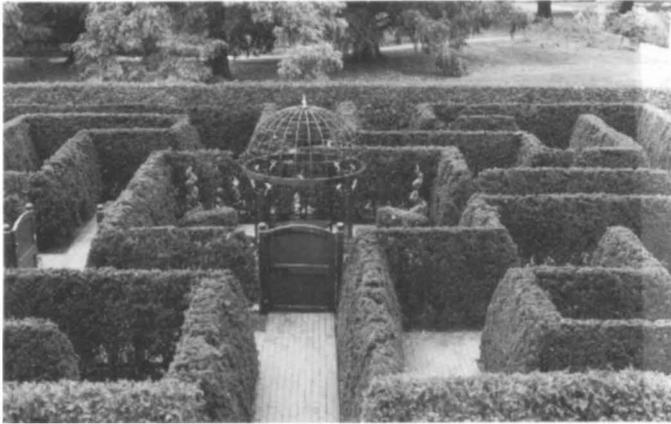
Relatively common in Europe, few garden mazes exist in the United States. Fortunately the staff of the Missouri Botanical Garden decided to perpetuate this great romantic and cultural garden idea. In 1986, they constructed their own 90’ by 90’ maze. When planted, the young plants were too low effectively to block the view and make the maze challenging. However, the American arborvitae,

Thuja occidentalis, that define the perimeter and the yews, *Taxus x media*, that create the interior paths, have now matured. The garden maze is expertly maintained and will give decades of enjoyment to visitors of any age. (See photos next page.)

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Lynn R. Batdorf is Curator of the National Boxwood Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. and International Registrar for Boxwood.



Looking down upon the maze from the top of the observatory, the entire maze can be viewed. The maze is entered by walking up from the bottom path, while the gazebo area is at the center and is the end of the maze.



Frequent visitors can easily memorize the solution. To keep the maze challenging, there are three doors such as this one, locked to the left post. To provide a different solution, the door can be locked to the right post.



*Once at the center, one is rewarded with a gazebo with a sitting area and, of course, boxwood! The boxwood is correctly known as *Buxus microphylla* 'Apple Green', while the label in the photo reads B. 'Applegreen'.*



Visitors may climb up to the deck of the bright and colorful observatory to view the maze. The lower interior area has several informative displays, giving the history and use of both garden mazes and observatories.

Bertie, the Boxwood

Ian Robertson

From a talk given at The American Boxwood Society Annual Meeting, May 1998.

Apologies to any Pete, Peter, Bert, Bertie, or Bertrand, Boris, Freddie, Percy, Sidney, Willy, Brian, Archi and Neddie with us today. BE STRONG. I will be gentle. (That covers the insurance part.)

Bertie The Boxwood struggling with the realities of existence under the guardianship of Peter The Person.

A gripping tale with a moral. Anyone not gripped please don't say.

In the book *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn a gorilla communicates in great depth with a human on the steps and mis-steps since man's beginnings on this planet.

Chris Tompkin and Christopher Bird wrote "The Secret Life of Plants" and "The Secrets of the Soil" showing the ability of plants to react to the changing emotions of man. This is not an easy thing to do "react to the changing emotions of man..." even for another man, let alone a boxwood.

Two plants in a room story and told to UVA LA students... Phenotypic differences. This changed my feelings towards organic cultivation and sustainability.

Listen to the biosphere, it has a vital story to tell. Many of us are moving further and further away from nature and view it with a certain amount of suspicion through the windows of our autos or with benign interest on a TV screen. I am not, of course, talking of us in this room. It is them out there.

In the same feel would it be reasonable to suggest that a communication between one of our lowly boxwoods (did I say that?) and a human is not too farfetched. Particularly amid this sympathetic audience.

"I paid money for this! The man's wacko. He's going to talk to a boxwood!! He thinks boxwood are gorillas, you watch!..." Lynn Batdorf is my credibility.

Now would Lynn allow you to go astray?

I will try to tell this story via the thoughts of an old friend of mine in Charlottesville. His name is Bertrand and what a splendid English boxwood he is. (We do not take tea together, however. He says he may spill it down his front.)

Early morning is the best time for us to communicate. Bertrand suggests that the coolness of the hour gives him extra strength and vitality. His whole being is full of life-giving water and he can even feel the minerals passing through his cells on their way to do important business in the leaves...making food. Breathing is a pleasure and the stomatal openings are fully extended taking the air. Bertrand has heard tell of places where some of his distant relatives hardly dare open their stomata and their life processes were reduced to a crawl. Here, he says, this is seldom the case so he is enjoying the morning freshness.

It is early October, the soil is cooling down and the excitement of that contact with airy dampness, and the fun of the chats his roots are having with his friends are so enjoyable. Friends like Boris the bacteria, Freddie the fungus, Percy the protozoa, Sidney the springtail, Willy the worm and Brian the beetle and even Archi the azotobacter (he is a little stuck up...though he makes the soil smell delightful and all boxwoods love that smell. It means good times are here ... for the moment anyway).

Just then Neddie the nematode

passes by and waves...then sneers. Could be a bit of a pain, but he has so many enemies chasing him he has little time to cause trouble. Bertrand tells me he enjoys it most when new compost is laid down as he knows Neddie will be racing for his life to avoid some of the predatory fungi contained in the compost. There is no time for attacking boxwood roots if "fight or flight" is on the immediate agenda.

Bertrand tells me it's a "dog eat dog" world down there and that is exactly how he likes. It keeps all his potential enemies under control. (wonder where he got "dog eat dog" from. Possibly an experience with a dog's leg.) He really enjoys the relationship he has with the mycorrhizal fungi that live symbiotically under his toe nails. I think he means root hairs. He suggested recently that mycorrhizal fungi are being introduced on the menu when a plant is first set into newly-graded soil. Made him feel more confident to have real friends on hand at such a time.

Bertie is happy, he is ready to communicate.

A squirrel fusses around Bertrand's roots and has a good scratch. That starts my friend off. "It was not always like this for me. We are English now but, way back, we used to be Dutch. That's where it all started. Our big boxwood cousins used to be English now they are American. Come to think of it those big cousins were not English either. They started off in southern Europe and North Africa. The Romans probably took them north to colder places. But I digress.

"It is said that those early days in Holland were good. My ancestors grew in neat rows in moist, air filled soil with lots of people to fuss over

them and worry. It is said even the sun was quite cool and soft. A few of them moved on to Britain, a damper spot where the winds blew a lot and the soils were all different. Some were chalky and they loved that calcium. I can only imagine that. In my experience today we have so much magnesium in the soil and that makes the soil sticky and often there is not enough calcium and who likes mucky feet? It's another odd thing that our ancestors often grew on chalk such as in southeast England on Box Hill yet so often we are given acid feed that brings our soils down and down to be more and more acid. This makes some of our other food become unavailable. Then we get a little weaker and zap... here come those bugs again sucking and boring on us... how do bugs know when we don't feel so good?

"I hear we may give off some charge that is different when we are sick. I must change my frequency.

"Still we do the best we can. Anyway in England they were planted in rows again and believe it or not the big cousins were also planted the same way as low edging and hedging!! The pruning was continual to keep them under control. I don't think they liked it too much. Apparently the summers were too short to make a lot of growth on most plants consequently we slow-growing English just grew too little. People just got fed up waiting for us.

"Which is also why many people liked us so much I suppose. Frustrating though it was, we were almost always planted too close either to each other (which was fun for a while) or too close to paths and people got grumpy when we made them wet (we enjoyed that too). Some people really don't seem to understand us. Those *knot gardens* were the oddest thing pushing out other plants then pushing out each other...then years later when we got to be just too

big, if you can believe that, and the haircut of our lives. If you want trauma or a near death experience try that. Suddenly sun on the roots...birds and animals fled...cold on your cut branch ends, including some very big cuts with a rasping, often blunt, saw (loosens the skin and that, let me tell you, is a no/no, particularly in January. The people have nothing to do in the garden in January so sometimes they attack us). Then lots of food and water and as we have hardly any leafy food factories left, it has no place to go. Quite exciting till we get it all sorted out and try for balance again.

"I hear we had a lot of people fussing around us. People seem to worry so about the oddest things. I remember myself a few years ago they sheared me because I got too big on one side but never asked if my feet felt OK and at the time they were aching with dryness. Very odd. Where is the quality of life?"

I agreed. Bertrand sighed "I bet you are no better than most of the rest of them." I agreed. For a moment I thought he was going to have a snooze, but no.

"My forefathers came to this country many years ago and the story goes that they had quite a shock. They got set in their new quarters, met new friends, thought life was good and indeed mostly it was. But then the heat! Not North African heat but a steamy heat to almost make your feet bubble. Sometimes it continued even right through the night. Then along came several, new to them, bugs that seemed determined to get inside these boxwoods one way or another. However those bugs had plenty of other bugs chasing them so they were not too inconvenienced by the intrusion.

"Many people came almost every day and fussed about them, but they did not seem to be quite the clever doctors they were used to. Everybody

was new to this place, they all had to get used to the new game.

The years passed, more and more of us arrived on the scene and there seemed to be less and less sign of the people looking after us. This has been a recent occurrence I am told. In my memory of some 140 years, it has been in the last 50 that it has become most noticeable."

Bertrand seemed a touch sad but tried not to show it being, as he is, of great importance. A chipmunk darted around in the mulch and debris at his feet. It tickled, I think. I thought he smiled...maybe.

"Let me tell you about my offspring, Bertie, Jr.," said the old fellow. "Actually I have had many offspring in my time and they do seem to find life harder as the years go by.

"There's Bertie. He is with some of his buddies just down on that flat shrub bed. What a hot place that is. The sun and wind are rather hard to put up with you know what a group several of them do look a little scruffy."

I had to agree several did look warworn for their age. A few too many parties, obviously.

"As we live so close, Bertie, Jr., and I have had the opportunity to chat a lot at night, when life stresses are a little less, about his upbringing. A sad tale and to end up in that bed does nothing for his self respect. Let me tell you about that bed:

"Trees down...big machines...wet
rain graded off top soil
Graded again
Top 3 inches loosened
Six inches top soil
Bertie, Jr. in with peat and fierce
looking food
A good soak
Nothing....

"I will tell his story in his own way as best as I can remember.

"It was August, several summers

ago, that I gave up my branch that Bertie came from. It happened early in the a.m. when I feel my best. I was happy to help. In three weeks he had become a plant....his own feet had formed and what a bright fellow he said he felt.

"Bertie goes on to say he was potted...in his own little pot with his own soil...with many others and all set out in rows. The light shade was such a help. Some of his friends were set in the afternoon sun and they had headaches every day and made very slow progress. There was food to begin with but water was a bit short. When it came, it really came, but sadly not all of us got a ration. As we seldom saw people it was always a shock for the water suddenly appeared. After a while the air seemed to leave the soil around my feet and even though I got water it was not invigorating any more, just a needed happening. I was getting fed up in my little pot.

"In November most of us moved. Some of us were too weak to travel and did not make the trip. We never heard from them again. Out to a huge field rows and rows of us, we made a very smart looking parade. That took a bit of getting used to. Cool feet at last and enough indigestible food to put you off eating. It tasted better after a few rains and we all got to the business of rooting out of our little circles. Now many times we have heard of roots being torn apart and slashed before we get planted and I think its pretty painful, so to cover the pain we really reroot fast. Nothing like work to take your mind off things, but if it's too hot in the soil and the wrong time of the year and we get slashed that is bad news, as we cannot help ourselves to repair the damage. That's a vulnerable period for us, you know. We rely completely on people to get us through to the fall if they plant us in July. That's reasonable, don't you think?

"Mostly it felt good and the winter passed in pleasant chat, rooting as fast as we could before the soil got too cold towards the end of winter and huddling up from the cold winds. Where is the shade when you want it? Wind is OK but winter sun and wind together!!

"It's difficult. In the winter my roots froze quite a lot and so my leaves dried out when the pump stopped and in the summer my roots dried and the same result occurred in my leaves One step forward, one step back.

"Dries out my leaves so that I thought the end had come. For some of us I believe it had. Spring came at last and I pushed hard and grew well. So did a lot of other different types of plants all around and that gave me some welcome shade. They wanted the same water and got a bit aggressive and started hanging all over us, but one day they all disappeared, pulled and hoed out. Good and bad for now the sun burnt my feet and the water disappeared. What a shock! Another shock! People do seem to enjoy being shocking!

"By October most of us looked and felt OK. We said goodbye to many friends who left in groups of a few and groups of many, day by day. That opened us up to wind and sun but I was too busy replacing lost roots that left with my neighbor to worry too much.

"Two years later my turn came in early April. I was measured (that had happened before), trussed up, feeling odd but secure...my roots cut mercilessly, wrapped and onto a truck. Bounced around on a long, hot trip under some burning green sheets, taken off the truck, then abandoned for three days all jammed in tight together. We were given a daily soak of our leaves but my feet were about shriveled with drought. An odd upside-down feeling. I was, and was not, thirsty at the same time. I know it

did me no good and I felt washed out. It took a long time to re-grow from that experience.

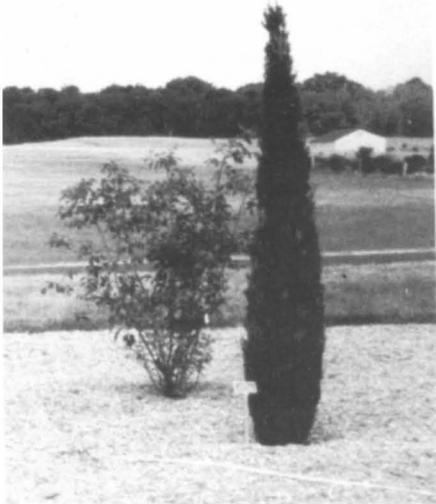
"We were planted on a warm day and finally I got my feet into cool moist soil. Something was not right, not really-like my friendly field, now just a memory. My feet felt claustrophobic and while thinking on this a large amount of fairly indigestible food arrived. It all looked exciting but was dangerous to get too close to. Difficult as it lay all around my feet. Water followed, a lot of it, and that was good. There followed the application of a great 4-inch deep blanket and it seemed to block off all the good air so that within a day or two I felt weary again."

Bertrand was doing well to remember so much of his offspring's story. I encouraged him to continue.

"Just as I was making the best of it a sticky spray arrived and this almost suffocated me. A worrying feeling to say the least. The people said anti-desiccant. I say anti-breathing. I hope it wears off soon. Also, the sun was also not quite so clear to me...well for two weeks in the sun. I sort of held my breath.

"Now into late April I did not feel much like rooting but thought I should try. The soil around me was sticky so I gave up on that then tried the mulch blanket above. That was easier but soon the feeling of hunger came over me as though I was missing something in my diet. Nitrogen possibly, too much mulch, but with all the water I was getting the only place I was not drowning was in the mulch blanket, where there was air and water. Three weeks later in late May the water stopped. That was painful as my new roots soon felt awful, painful and began to die back. Let me tell you that is not nice.

"Hot and dry. Spider mites, tiny but very irritating. You just wanted to scratch but could not. The medicine that stopped the itching smelled and



This is a plant where people and plant communicated well.

tasted awful. Several of my insect pals left at the same time. I have not seen them again either.

“It was a long hot summer and I felt bad. Of course, Bertrand was cool in the light shade on higher ground that looked good to live in. That didn’t help my feelings.

“As the weather cooled we got a big dose of food, some of which was still lying up on my stem after two months, and it burns me a bit. More blanket followed and the air became stuffy again. Then the people seemed to disappear and we were left to plod on. Over a period of time, a few friends had died and some others showed the most worrying brown branches.

There was a lot of grousing about our new home but it made no difference we were stuck here. New boxwood were brought to replace the departed dead and really looked very green and fit. However, they were set in the same holes left open when the others were removed. Seemed odd to me and our new friends did not like it either.

“Some 4-5 years passed and we had some painful dry summers and after each I found life a little harder to

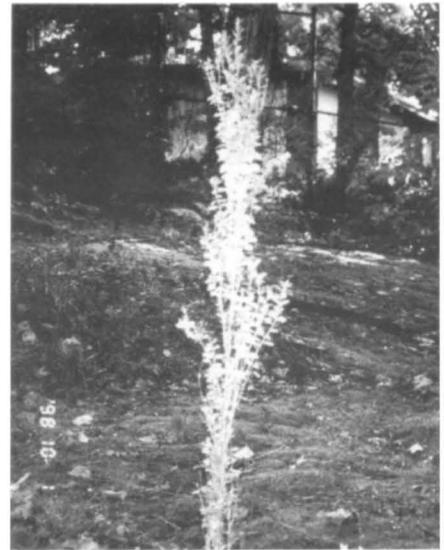
cope with. I dropped leaves and they built up inside me and it was most uncomfortable. I got so silly about it and without thinking, my roots started growing into the debris.

“It made me very hungry again.

“One year some of my *real* roots became numb and I think some died. I made more roots into the leaves in my center and felt a bit sicker. Some of my friends got afternoon shade and that helped. I did not and my head hurt a lot by evening time. Suddenly a person arrived pouring a poison onto the soil. You should have heard the screams of the dying microbes. All my friends being wiped out, and then it was all quiet, very quiet, very sad. I was unhappy. Apparently it was an attempt to kill Neddie the nematode. Some Neddies were left so they attacked me again with no competition from my friends who, for a while, had all gone.

“Happily compost was later added under the existing mulch. That kept the compost moist and away from the sun. It was good, too. As it was so well rotted, it took no extra effort on the part of all the microbes to rot it down further. It was ready to help us right away. and with it came hordes of new friends to attack the Neddies and each other. It was a good feeling. What a difference that made. I felt more determined to live and a new start seemed to me a brilliant idea. Friends help that way.

“It is said people are coming to take out some of my dead leaves and a few of my branches to let the light in so I get myself sorted out as to where the right place to root is! Then they will test the soil for food (in a special way that tests for all my needs, getting them in the right balance) and possibly adding more compost. That all sounds promising. However, I did hear other people in ties talking about budgets and letting us do the best we can for ourselves. It seems to me if we are set out in these



Here conditions were not good and communications broke down.

awful situations we should not be just left!

“I am hoping for the good days to come, but because I move so slowly, I just hope this help continues for several years. These people must have constructive patience with my friends and myself.”

Bertrand, my majestic friend, smiled softly at me. “This is Bertie, Jr.’s story up to last week.

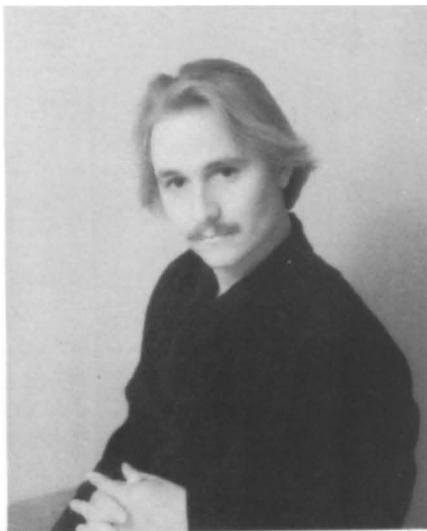
“You know there is a moral to this story. When you speak to the people again ask them to try to understand us, the plants, a little more. Find out how we really work, what we need, how we feel.

“We really are not too complicated or judgmental and our natural surroundings are all on our side. There is a great interconnection in nature. People just have to attempt to understand that, and fight to put the odds back in our favor.”

I touched my friend. I think he was happy and we both recognized the importance of our communication.

Ian Robertson is a Director of The American Boxwood Society and a horticultural design consultant.

New ABS Officers



Daniel Moses
Vice-President

Hello, American Boxwood Society! It is an honor to be elected as the Second Vice-President of the Society in 1998. A long, wonderful path has brought me to this point. I started in the horticultural business at the ripe old age of 15, doing landscape work for a local business in my hometown of Pacific, Missouri. It was a job as well as a hobby for me. I worked with that business off and on for six years.

I moved away at the age of 21 to Louisiana, Missouri, where I worked for a brief period for Stark Brothers Nursery. It gave me a taste of the large market and dealing with folks from all over the country. Definitely some valuable lessons learned there.

After working in sales for the first part of my career, I switched gears and went to work for a wholesale nursery by the name of Bowood Farms located in Clarksville, Missouri. A quiet little Mississippi River town with charming people and beautiful views.

It's at Bowood where I really learned the most about shrubs and perennials. I got my first real taste of boxwood and what wonderful plants they are to work with. You see, at Bowood the boxwood were in a plot between the rose bushes and the woody vines.

I bet you can guess why I took to the boxwood so fondly. They were soft to the touch, easy to prune and slow to grow. What more could you ask from a plant. And green all year to boot!

After working for Bowood for three years life's circumstances brought me back to my home of St. Louis and that is where I started down the next path of my career, working for the Missouri Botanical Garden. I started work at MBG just as the hard scape construction of the Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden was completed.

What an opportunity to come in at ground level of a new garden. I played a large part in the plant selection and layout of the garden. I did most of the planting myself, an accomplishment I am really proud of. We have 32 varieties of boxwood and I am always trying out new varieties in our temperamental Midwest climate.

Come see me and my garden if you have the chance. I would love to sit and talk with you about boxwood and the day's events. I look forward to a wonderful year on the board of The American Boxwood Society and meeting and talking to as many members as possible. I'm glad to be here! Have a wonderful year!



Ian Robertson
Director

Born in England.

Formal training at The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Manager of rare plant nursery in England followed by landscape maintenance manager of large design/construction business in Washington DC.

Back to England to run his own design/build business for 13 years.

Believe it or not back to U.S., Charlottesville, Virginia.

Design and horticultural consultation from Los Angeles to Wisconsin, Long Island, to Florida and the Caribbean.

Lecturing at UVA and PVCC plus many horticultural organizations including keynote speaker at the annual American Boxwood Society conference in Williamsburg.

Now with his own design/horticultural consultation business based in Charlottesville.

The family are more settled now that Ian and his wife, Judy, have worn out their travel needs.

Or have they?

Update on ABS Memorial Garden at Blandy Farm



Jim W. Saunders
Director

Jim Saunders has had a life-long interest in agriculture. He received a B.S. in Animal Science from Virginia Tech in 1985, and was for six years an Extension Agent in 4-H agriculture in Madison County, Virginia.

Since 1991 he has been Personnel Manager, Boxwood Production Supervisor, and Cattle Manager at his firm, Saunders Brothers, Inc., at Piney River, Virginia.

He has held leadership positions in the Virginia Angus Association, Central Virginia Angus Association, Nelson-Amherst Beef Producers Association and Virginia Tech Agricultural Alumni Organization.

He is a Deacon of the Clifford Baptist Church in Clifford, Virginia, and has three small children.

In Memoriam

Mr. Robert J. Culver
Member since 1984

Mr. William R. Watkins
Member since 1989

Mr. Robert Lee McCarty
Member since 1995



Tags mark the location of a planned parterre around the sign. Daffodils were planted here last year. (Photos: D. Frackelton)



Sigrid Harriman, ABS Secretary, and Joan Butler, Chairman, ABS Memorial Garden, planning parterres to focus on the topiary, to be balanced with a second B. sempervirens 'Graham Blandy'.



Joan Butler and Sigrid Harriman couldn't resist pulling a few weeds in the South Bed of the ABS Memorial Garden.

The Seasonal Gardener

Practical tips for boxwood enthusiasts from Society members



PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING

When planting a new boxwood, it is important to know how large it will be at maturity. Future problems of overcrowding can be avoided if the ultimate size is known. This allows the plant to be spaced properly when initially planted. Small- to medium-size boxwood can be successfully transplanted by the homeowner from one area to another. To move large boxwood, it is best to seek help from a professional landscape contractor.

When is the best time to move boxwoods?

Planting and transplanting is best done in early fall, generally October. This allows the boxwood time to produce new roots which will help the plant take up water during the winter. As long as the ground is not frozen, the plant spends the majority of its time in winter producing new roots.

An alternative season is early spring, before new growth starts. Late spring and summer can be a difficult time for moving boxwoods. Monitoring cultural conditions is important in this case.

How are boxwoods moved?

Boxwood roots seldom grow very deep in relation to the total plant. The roots will, however, spread a great deal, so in digging the root ball, width is more critical than depth. The root ball ought to be at least as wide as the drip line. The depth of the ball is usually determined by the height of the plant. A 3:1 ratio provides a general guideline. For example, a 6' tall boxwood should have a root ball 1 1/2' to 2' deep. Root prune larger plants a year in advance if practical. To facilitate digging and transporting, tie up the branches of medium to large plants with rope or heavy twine. Digging should not be attempted if the soil is excessively dry or wet. If too dry, water the boxwood thoroughly several days in advance.

Before digging, mark a circle on the ground at the approximate "drip line" of the foliage. The majority of the feeder, or hair roots are in this zone. This line, at minimum, is where the outside of the root ball will

be. Using a flat-edge spade with its back turned to the plant, cut straight down 9" to 12". Continue all the way around the circle. Dig a trench outside the circle. Then trim the root ball by removing surplus soil so that it is uniformly tapered. Be sensitive to the amount of roots being cut by the spade.

If a large number of roots are being cut, it would be prudent to ease off cutting at that area and make the ball wider. Conversely, if no roots are found, the ball can be dug closer to the trunk. After trimming, undercut the root ball at an angle of 45°.

With small root balls, those under 10" to 12" in diameter, the plant can be removed from the hole using two spades inserted under the ball from opposing sides. For slightly larger root balls, 8" to 15", it will be necessary to tip the root ball to one side and insert a burlap bag under the ball. Then lift the plant by grasping the corners of the burlap. For root balls larger than about 16", the root ball should be wrapped in burlap and then reinforced with rope. This will keep the root ball from falling apart.

How are boxwoods planted?

At the site, dig the depth of the hole the approximate size of the root ball. It is best to place boxwoods on firm soil. One of the most common mistakes in transplanting is to plant a boxwood too deeply. Even planting a boxwood at the existing soil line is too deep. The top 1/8 of the root ball ought to be above the existing soil level. Place the ball into the hole. If synthetic burlap is used, remove it from the ball at this time. Natural burlaps can remain on the ball and only need to be loosened from around the trunk. Fill the hole with soil and water slowly at the base of the plant.

Do not thin the foliage after planting or transplanting. It is the leaves that produce sugars the plant needs for root growth. By reducing the leaves, the plant's ability to produce new roots is proportionally reduced. The more vigorous the root growth, the quicker the plant becomes established.

