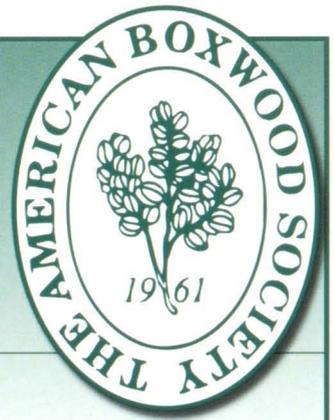


# THE BOXWOOD BULLETIN



A quarterly of the American Boxwood Society  
devoted to our oldest garden ornamental

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*The original plant of Buxus sempervirens 'Vardar Valley,' 352-35-E, was 23.3 feet wide by 8.3 feet tall (7 m x 2.5 m) in December, 2006. Photo by P. Del Tredici.*

# The American Boxwood Society

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# 'Vardar Valley' Boxwood and Its Balkan Brothers

By Peter Del Tredici

*"In 1934, I visited Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia under the joint auspices of Harvard University and the United States Department of Agriculture, choosing by preference the sun-baked areas of the northwestern Balkans, which have cold, dry winters like ours [in St. Louis]. I attempted to collect seeds and cuttings of four interesting evergreens, holly, ivy, yew, and box, on the theory that, even though they looked more or less identical with these same species in northern Europe, they must be different on the inside."*  
(Edgar Anderson, 1945)

With these words, the former director of the Missouri Botanical Garden and one-time Arnold Arboretum staff member, Edgar Anderson, described his memorable trip across eastern Europe in search of reliably hardy, broadleaved evergreens. At the time, it probably seemed like just another Arboretum collecting expedition to a distant corner of the globe. But looking back on it now-seventy-three years later—we know that it was a special trip that produced several horticulturally important introductions. Foremost among these were seeds and cuttings of the common or English boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens*, collected from plants that were growing along the Treska River just outside the city of Skopje, the capitol of Macedonia.

In 1957, one of Anderson's boxwood selections was given the name 'Vardar Valley' because of its outstanding winter hardiness and mounded growth form. As the cultivar spread slowly through the nursery trade during the 1970s and 80s, it became apparent that 'Vardar Valley' was resistant to virtually all of the pests and diseases—including the dreaded boxwood decline—which were damaging or killing common boxwood across eastern North America (Batdorf, 2004). The recognition of this resistance, together with its outstanding hardiness and compact habit, resulted in an explosive increase in the landscape use of 'Vardar Valley', beginning in the 1990s and continuing through today (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The original plant of *Buxus sempervirens* 'Vardar Valley,' 352-35-E, was 23.3 feet wide by 8.3 feet tall (7 m x 2.5 m) in December, 2006. Photo by P. Del Tredici.

## Edgar Anderson, the Man

Before proceeding further with the story of *Buxus* 'Vardar Valley', it would be appropriate to take a look back at the man who is responsible for producing this important cultivar. Edgar Anderson was born in Forestville, New York in 1897, and moved to East Lansing, Michigan as a child. He attended Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University), where his father was a professor of dairy husbandry, and graduated in 1918. Anderson received his doctorate from the Bussey Institution of Harvard University in 1922, where he studied *Nicotiana* under Dr. Edward M. East. The Bussey was located adjacent to the Arnold Arboretum and provided Anderson with the opportunity to familiarize himself with the collections and get to know various staff members (Hay, 1995). While at the Bussey, Edgar also met Dorothy Moore, who was working as a laboratory assistant for East while finishing up her Master's degree in botany from Wellesley College. The two were married in 1923.

Following his graduation from Harvard in 1922, Anderson went to work for the Missouri Botanical Garden, and in 1929 was awarded a National Research Fellowship for study in England with a focus on genetics under the guidance of J. B. S. Haldane. He also studied cytology with C. D. Darlington at the John Innes Horticultural Institute and statistics with R. A. Fisher at the Rothampstead Field Station. Anderson returned to the Missouri Botanical Garden in 1930 and, a year later, accepted an appointment as Arborist at the Arnold Arboretum where he worked until the fall of 1935. The primary responsibilities of the position were care of the living collections and furthering the Arboretum's relations with the public (Hay, 1995). In his biography of Anderson, John Finan notes that his five years at the Arnold were frustrating because of "the large number of speaking and other public service obligations at the Arboretum did not allow him to pursue his research interests. Indeed, the press of duties became so great that, as Dorothy Anderson's diary records, he suffered severe exhaustion in the spring of 1934. He went with his family to England in July, 1934 and he spent August and September on a collecting trip to the Balkans." Anderson resigned his position at the Arnold in the summer of 1935 and returned to the Missouri Botanical Garden, where he spent the remainder of his botanical career.

Today, Anderson is primarily remembered for his groundbreaking work on the role that hybridization plays in the evolution of plants which is summarized in *Introgressive Hy-*

bridization, published in 1949. He was also interested in the history of domesticated plants and published a popular book on the subject in 1952, *Plants, Man and Life*, that is still in print. Anderson was appointed director of the Missouri Botanical Garden in 1954, but resigned in 1957 to go back to the teaching and research that he so dearly loved. During his life time Anderson received many honors, including membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences, as well as the Darwin-Wallace Medal of the Linnaean Society. He died in St. Louis in 1969 at the age of seventy-two. Writing in 1972, his good friend, G. Ledyard Stebbins of the University of California, Davis, described Anderson's humanitarian side with the following words:

I cannot conclude without referring to Edgar Anderson's great faith in mankind, which let him to adopt and follow zealously the Quaker religion and way of life. He accepted family tragedies calmly and resolutely. His inner conflict with himself was never wholly resolved, but he never wavered in his belief that he could make life better for others by his kindness toward them, and his ability to share with them his extraordinary perception of the wonders of plant life, and what plants could mean to people.

## The Balkan Expedition

Anderson's trip to the Balkans in 1934 was co-sponsored by the Arnold Arboretum and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. While it is usually not mentioned in his life list of scientific accomplishments, it was Anderson's most important foray into the field of ornamental horticulture, and 'Vardar Valley' his most significant contribution. Indeed, the only other ornamentals—besides *Buxus*—that Anderson collected on the trip which are still commercially grown are two cultivars of Baltic Ivy (*Hedera helix* var. *baltica*) 'MBG Rumania' and 'MBG Bulgaria.' Anderson was not successful in his attempt to introduce a winter-hardy race of butcher's broom (*Ruscus* spp.), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus* var. *shipkaiensis*) or English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) from the Balkans. However, still growing on the grounds of the Arnold Arboretum are three accessions of European yew (*Taxus baccata*, AA #935-34, 370-35 and 371-35), one wild lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*, AA #949-34), and one wild pear (*Pyrus elaeagrifolia*, AA #948-34) from the trip.

The story of how Anderson came to learn about and collect Balkan boxwood is best told in his own words, in an article he wrote for *The Boxwood Bulletin* in 1963:

"Boxwoods are not evenly distributed all over Europe; there is a northern area where they are found and then another separate area at the south. At the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew and at the Botanical Gardens in Belgrade by consultation and study in the herbarium I found that the northernmost extension of this southern strain was just outside of Skopelie [Skopje] in the valley of the Vardar River, in the Macedonian edge of Yugoslavia. The government gave me a courier to travel with me and help in buying tickets, reporting to the police, carrying luggage and generally serving as a companion. He was a White Russian and spoke almost no English but he spoke fluent German and we communicated in that language.

Our directions had been to go to a monastery in the outskirts of Skopelie and that there we would find

boxwood in quantity. My memory is that we took some sort of conveyance out to the bridge over either the Vardar or one of its tributaries and then proceeded afoot along the pathway which led to the unpretentious little whitewashed monastery. [Note: This is most likely the Monastery of Sveti Andreja on the banks of the Treska River, which flows into the Vardar River southwest of Skopje.] The river bed, broad and gravelly, was at one side and the mountains from which the stream rose loomed ahead, dry and rocky with some shrubs on the lower slopes and here and there an occasional battered tree. The records of the monastery showed that up to a few hundred years ago the mountain was largely covered with a beechwood forest, from which the monastery had drawn a substantial part of its revenue. Over-cutting and over-grazing had destroyed the forest. Heavy erosion had done the rest and much of the mountain was down to the bare rock. Goats, which were still everywhere, were the worst offenders and when we came to the acres and acres of boxwood they too were nibbled, sometimes almost down to the ground; seldom or never were they over shoulder high. While the boxwoods grew in great abundance there were other characteristic evergreen shrubs in with them; big bushy thyme and rosemarys I remember in particular.

At the time of our visit the seeds were already ripe and had been scattered by the browsing goats. We got down on our hands and knees and picked up the shiny black sees (a little smaller than apple seeds) from underneath the bushes. It was slow work but we eventually got a hundred or so. We also took cuttings to send back airmail to my collaborators in England and made herbarium specimens of the boxwoods and other shrubs. The bushes had been so heavily grazed it was difficult to tell anything about their growth habit but from the stubs that were left it was easy to see that there was much more variation from bush to bush than in the boxwoods where grew wild (or apparently so) at Box Hill in the south of England. They varied conspicuously in leaf size and in leaf shape and in the amount of bluish bloom on the leaves."

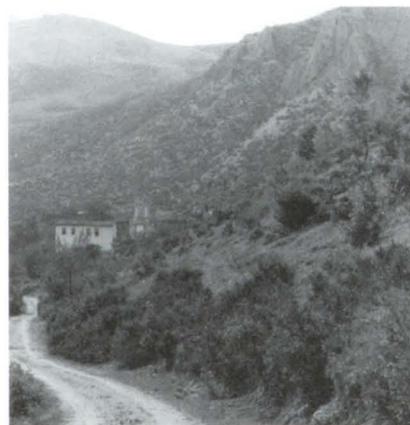


Figure 2. Anderson photo #17415 with the caption: "Yugoslavia, Skoplje [sic], Treska Gorge. *Buxus sempervirens* habitat. Photos. by Edgar Anderson, Sept. 19, 1934. Locality where herbarium specimen #133 was collected." From the Arnold Arboretum Archives.

In the Arnold Arboretum Archives I unearthed several of the photographs Anderson took while on his Balkan trip, including one labeled #17415 with the caption, "Yugoslavia, Skoplje [sic], Treska Gorge. *Buxus sempervirens* habitat. Photos by Edgar Anderson, Sept. 19, 1934. Locality where herbarium specimen #133 was collected" (Figure 2). A second photo



Figure 3. Anderson photo #17416 with the caption: "Yugoslavia, Skoplje, Treska Gorge. *Buxus sempervirens*. Photos. by Edgar Anderson, 1934. Herbarium specimen #133." From the Arnold Arboretum Archives.

But the joy was quashed after I located an undated, typewritten manuscript that Anderson wrote, probably in mid- to late-1935, entitled, "Report on Balkan Expedition to the Arnold Arboretum." It lists all of his collections, including *Buxus sempervirens* #133 which was made on Sept. 19, 1934, and is stated to have consisted of seeds from two plants, eventually given AA #789-34 and 818-34, and cuttings from two plants, given AA #352-35 and 353-35. Anderson clearly used #133 to designate a collection location rather than in reference to a specific, individual plant.



Figure 4. A high resolution scan of Anderson's original herbarium specimen for *Buxus sempervirens* #133 housed at the Harvard University Herbaria in Cambridge.

while the leaves of 'Vardar Valley' are larger, far more ovate shaped with an acute apex."

## The Publication of 'Vardar Valley'

Anderson collected cuttings from four different boxwood plants during the course of his Balkans expedition: two from

plate, number 17416, consists of three separate pictures that show the plant herbarium specimen #133 was collected from (Figure 3). What makes these photos especially interesting is that the plant that eventually became the cultivar 'Vardar Valley' (AA #352-35) came in under Anderson #133 (see box).

Needless to say I was quite pleased to think that I might have discovered a photograph of the original 'Vardar Valley' growing in the wilds of Macedonia.

The truth of this supposition was confirmed when I obtained a high resolution scan of Anderson's original *Buxus sempervirens* herbarium specimen #133 from the Harvard University Herbaria, which showed a plant with long, narrow leaves as opposed to the distinctly rounded leaves that are typical of 'Vardar Valley' (Figure 4). To quote Lynn Batdorf, boxwood curator at the U. S. National Arboretum and registrar for the genus *Buxus*, "The leaves of herbarium specimen #133 are elliptic to oblong with an obtuse apex,

cultivated plants in Bucharest, Rumania and two from wild plants at location #133 outside Skopje. Anderson chose to send the plants and cuttings directly to the John Innes Horticultural Institute in London rather than to the Arnold Arboretum for two reasons: first, the stopover would cut down on the length of time the fragile material would spend in transit; and second, Anderson knew people at the John Innes Institute from when he spent time there in 1929. In one of the letters he wrote from Yugoslavia to Oakes Ames<sup>1</sup>, the Supervisor of the Arnold Arboretum, Anderson listed the material he sent to the Innes Institute for propagation: "Cutting and plants of the following sent to London: *Hedera helix*—5 localities; *Taxus baccata*—1 locality; *Prunus lauro-cerasus shipkaiensis*—2 localities; *Buxus*—1 locality; *Ruscus*—2 localities."

The staff of the John Innes Horticultural Institute successfully rooted Anderson's four *Buxus* selections, and then sent them on to the Arnold, where they arrived on April 1, 1935, and were given accession numbers 350-35 through 353-35. The Arboretum's propagator took a second generation of cuttings from the Innes Institute plants on April 2, and most of these rooted and were potted up on December 3, 1935. At some point during the early 1940s, a number of these rooted cuttings were planted out on the grounds amidst the Arboretum's boxwood collection.

Around this same time, in November, 1942, one plant each of the four cutting-grown selections and one seedling from accession number 789-34 were distributed to the geneticist Orland E. White<sup>2</sup>, Director of the Blandy Research Farm of the University of Virginia in Boyce, Virginia and to Henry Hohman, owner of Kingsville Nursery in Kingsville, Maryland. While other individuals and institutions undoubtedly received rooted cuttings of Anderson's boxwood at a later date, these two were the first to receive them, undoubtedly because they were friends of Anderson's and had a special interest in boxwood.

In 1957, Donald Wyman, who had been appointed Arnold Arboretum horticulturist in late 1935 to replace Anderson, formally named one of his predecessor's boxwoods 'Vardar Valley'. In an article in *Arnoldia*, Wyman explained why the plant he selected was special:

Eight plants were grown to size over a period of many years. Several of these were sent outside the Arboretum for trial elsewhere. Cuttings were sent to at least one commercial nursery which, in turn, rooted them and propagated more, selling the resulting plants [this was probably Henry Hohman]. Enthusiastic responses have come from several of these sources so that now it is thought wise to name this plant *Buxus sempervirens* 'Vardar Valley' and to start propagating it for a wide distribution. . . Cuttings, rooted in 1935, have grown into plants that are now four feet across, with a fairly uniform flat top, but only two feet high. This habit is

<sup>1</sup> Ames had been one of Anderson's botany professors at the Bussey Institution and was appointed Supervisor of the Arboretum in 1927 following the death of its founding director, C. S. Sargent. I suspect that it was Ames who persuaded Anderson to come work at the Arnold Arboretum in 1930 and that Ames' retirement in 1935 may have been a factor in his decision to leave. Anderson's 1952 book, "Plants, Man and Life" is dedicated to Oakes Ames, Orland White, and Carl Sauer.

<sup>2</sup> Like Anderson, Orland White was one of Dr. East's graduate students, who earned his D.Sc. degree from the Bussey Institution in 1913. As noted above, Anderson's 1952 book, *Plants, Man and Life* is dedicated to Oakes Ames, Orland White, and Carl Sauer.

of outstanding importance, for it is low enough to be covered or partially covered by snow in winter, or else it is an easy matter to protect the plant in other ways when necessary. It is unlike other varieties of *Buxus sempervirens* in having this low, flat-topped shape. Apparently, it is as hardy as any clone we have yet tried. In January of 1957, the temperature dropped to -23° F at Weston, and although there was some snow on the

ground, the top of the plant was not covered nor was it injured. A large plant in the Arboretum has not shown any marked winter injury. Reports from others in Cleveland show that it has withstood temperatures of -20° F there, and we know that it had withstood similar temperatures in Boston. The foliage is a glossy, dark green, similar to that of the species, while new young foliage is first bluish green.

## ***Buxus sempervirens* accessions received by the Arnold Arboretum from Anderson's 1934 Balkans Expedition:**

- ◆ 350-35 = "*Buxus sempervirens* #1 Bucharest E. Anderson. (from the John Innes Hort Inst., Mostyn Rd., London SW. 19) April 1, 1935. 20 cutts April 2, 1935. 18 boxed Dec. 3, 1935." [According to Anderson's undated report, these cuttings were collected from a cultivated plant. One specimen was planted on the AA grounds in 1950; it was removed in July, 1982.]
- ◆ 351-35 = "*Buxus sempervirens* #2 E. Anderson. Bucharest, Rumania April 1, 1935. 66 cutts April 2, 1935. 58 boxed Dec. 3, 1935." [According to Anderson's undated report to the Arnold Arboretum, these cuttings were collected from a cultivated plant. Two specimens of #351-35 were planted on the AA grounds in 1950; *plant A* was removed in April 1981; the name of *plant B* was changed to *Buxus sempervirens suffruticosa* by Donald Wyman on Oct. 25, 1956, and it was "stolen by vandals" on Sept. 24, 1960. In 1984, #351-35 was assigned the cultivar name 'Edgar Anderson' by Mary Gamble in *The Boxwood Bulletin* 24: 41-53.]
- ◆ 352-35 = "*Buxus sempervirens*. Treska Gorge, Skoplje #133. E. Anderson, April 1, 1935. 44 cutts April 2, 1935. (42). 40 boxed Dec. 3, 1935." [This accession was named 'Vardar Valley' by Donald Wyman. As of December 2006, the plant was 23.3 feet wide by 8.3 feet tall (7 m x 2.5 m).]
- ◆ 353-35 = "*Buxus sempervirens*, E. Anderson no label, April 1, 1935; 58 cutts April 2, 1935. (52) 50 boxed Dec. 3, 1935." [According to Anderson's undated report to the Arnold Arboretum, these cuttings were part of collection #133 at Treska Gorge. An unsigned note at the bottom of the accession card reads: "Do not name this clone. It is not as good as 'Inglis', and has a few browned leaves 4/27/66. On this date it is 6' tall, 7' across. Foliage lighter green than the much lower 'Varder Valley.' Accord-
- ing to Arboretum records, one specimen was planted on the AA grounds in 1950, and was removed in November, 1982. A cutting of this plant at the National Arboretum was given the cultivar name 'Scupi' in 1998 and registered in 2000.]
- ◆ 789-34: "*Buxus sempervirens*. seed #133 E. Anderson. Treska Gorge, Skoplje, Yugo-Slavia. Oct 5, 1934. germ Dec. 27, 1934. 25 boxed Dec. 27, 1934." [According to Arboretum records, one specimen was planted on the grounds in 1950, and was reported missing in 1986. One plant from this seed lot at the National Arboretum was given the cultivar name 'Treska Gorge' in 1998 and registered in 2000.]
- ◆ 818-34: "*Buxus sempervirens*. seed #133 E. Anderson. Treska Gorge, Skoplje. Oct 30, 1934. germ June 20, 1935. 7 potted July 16, 1936." [According to Arboretum records, none of these seedlings were planted on the grounds or distributed.]

Anderson left the Arnold Arboretum at the end of the summer in 1935 and returned to the Missouri Botanical Garden, taking his interest in Balkan boxwood with him. Again, the story of Anderson's second wave of boxwood introductions is best told in his own words in *The Boxwood Bulletin*, written in 1963:

It was from St. Louis that the largest number of boxwoods were introduced. I got in touch by mail with the acquaintances I had made in the Yugoslav forest service<sup>3</sup> and we imported a pound or so of boxwood seed which was raised at the Gray Summit Arboretum of the Missouri Botanical Garden. Eventually a fairly complete set of more than a hundred different bushes was sent as cutting under number to Henry Hohman of Kingsville, Maryland for distribution to the Orland

E. White Research Arboretum at Blandy Farm and to the box collection at the College of William and Mary. They are extremely variable like the population from which they came and among them are certainly going to be found the hardiest in existence. They are doubly hardy because of the area they come from, being drought resistant as well as cold resistant.

Horticultural selections from Anderson's second importation of Balkan boxwood have come to be known as the "K-series" boxwood, to distinguish them from the earlier selections distributed by the Arnold Arboretum. The history of the K-series boxwood has been painstakingly pieced together by Mary Gamble in her articles in *The Boxwood Bulletin* published in 1975 and 1984. As she recounts the story, Paul A. Kohl, floriculturist at the Missouri Botanical Garden for forty years, told her that a boxwood seed arrived in September, 1936 from Anderson's contact in the Yugoslavian Forest Service. The seed, which had most likely been collected earlier that summer, was propagated in two locations, at the main garden in St. Louis by Kohl, and at Gray Summit Arboretum (now the Shaw Nature Reserve), about 35 miles from St. Louis, by Martin Bagby. Eventually,

<sup>3</sup> For clues as to who this person might be, I turned to Anderson's undated "Report on Balkan Expedition to The Arnold Arboretum." In this document he only mentions one person who worked for the Yugoslavian Forest Service: "Herr Ing. Ohm, Forest Service, Skoplje. This forester, stationed at present in Slopplje is the best botanist actually located in the neighborhood, though he is liable to transfer at any time. He has an herbarium of his own and has a very real interest in botanical problems. Most of the foresters whom I met are more interested in hunting wild boars than in votanical problems allied to their work."

seedlings from both locations were brought together in a special boxwood nursery at Gray Summit.

In June, 1954 Anderson distributed cuttings from a number of these Balkan plants to the National Arboretum with cultivar names which reflected their Yugoslavian origin: 'Agram', 'Nish', 'Petch' and 'Ipek', all being ancient names for famous cities in the region. In 1955, following this initial cultivar selection and distribution, Mr. Clarence Barbré, a retired chemist and avid horticulturist from Webster Groves, Missouri, selected 155 of the Balkan seedlings at Gray Summit for further horticultural trial. These selections were assigned numbers preceded by the letter "K", which designated the Kingsville Nursery owned and operated by Henry Hohman, to whom the unrooted cutting were sent for propagation and distribution.

Hohman rooted the cuttings and in 1957 and 1958 sent sets of plants under their original K-numbers to the University of Washington Arboretum in Seattle, the United States National Arboretum in Washington, DC, the Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce, Virginia, and Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. According to the latest research (2004) by Lynn Batdorf, the National Arboretum has fifty of the original plants; the Blandy Farm has twenty-nine; the Washington Park Arboretum has six; Longwood Gardens has twenty; and the Missouri Botanical Garden, including the Shaw Nature Reserve, has thirty-five.

The Arnold Arboretum received unrooted cuttings of 64 of the K-series boxwoods from the National Arboretum on January 29, 1964 (AA # 83-64 through 146-64), has three living plants from this distribution: #131-64 (= K-24), a conical plant, 11.7 feet wide by 13.3 feet tall; #113-64 (= K-33), a tall plant, 13.3 feet wide by 21.7 feet tall; and #116-64 (= K-75), a low-growing plant resembling 'Vardar Valley', 16.7 feet wide by 7.3 feet tall. These three plants, which are growing near the original specimen of 'Vardar Valley', make a fitting memorial to a great man and a great botanist.

### **An Interesting Postscript**

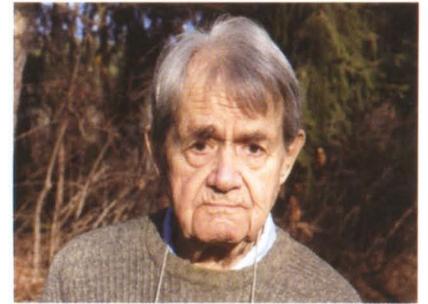
The story of 'Vardar Valley' is interesting for its own sake, but what really got me going on the subject was something I read in a letter that Anderson wrote from the Balkans to Professor Oakes Ames, Supervisor of the Arboretum at the time. I was reading the letters at the behest of my friend from Longwood Gardens, Dr. Tomasz Anisko, who was planning a trip to Skopje in the summer of 2007, and wanted me to see if I could find any of Anderson's original collecting books in the Arboretum Archives. The books weren't there but the letters were. One letter, in particular, caught my attention. It was written on September 3, 1934 from the mouth of the Danube River in Salina-Tuscea, Rumania. In the letter he was describing his earlier travels: "At Cluj my companion, Erhart Muller started back for the Harvard Medical School. He has been very helpful in many ways, gathering seeds, labeling packages, building up my German, and has greatly reduced traveling expenses since he always paid his half of cab and boat fare. I celebrated his departure by going to bed with an acute attack of diarrhea."

What stunned me about this passage was that I actually knew Erhart Muller and he was alive and well, and living in the town of Harvard, Massachusetts, about thirty miles west of Boston. I had first met him in 1972, when I was living in Harvard and working at the Harvard Forest. I knew that Erhart had traveled with Anderson on his Balkan trip, but somehow or

other I failed to appreciate the full significance of this fact when he first told me about it thirty years ago. It wasn't until his name popped out at me from a letter written in 1934 that the proverbial light bulb went off in my mind. Maybe Erhard had been with Anderson when he collected 'Vardar Valley' was my first thought? But the date of the letter in which he is mentioned, September 3, clearly indicates that he went home before Anderson collected the 'Vardar Valley' cuttings outside of Skopje on September 19. So, in much the same way that I was foiled in my attempt to turn up hard evidence of 'Vardar Valley' on herbarium specimen #133, I was thwarted in my attempt to locate a living witness to the collection of 'Vardar Valley'.

Nevertheless, I decided to pay Erhard a visit to see what he might remember about Anderson and about the trip (Figure 5).

As it turns out, the answer is not very much. Erhart was born in 1909—his father immigrated to the United States from Barmen, Germany and his mother was an American of German extraction from New York. He grew up in the New York City area, spent a year at boarding school in Germany after World War I,



*Figure 5. A portrait of Erhart Muller, December, 2006 by P. Del Tredici.*

and attended Harvard College where he studied anthropology. One highlight of his college days made newspaper headlines in April, 1929 when the small biplane he was traveling to New York in was forced to make an emergency landing on Memorial Drive, a major roadway along the Charles River in Cambridge. Upon his graduation from Harvard in 1932, Erhart spent the summer in Montenegro with one of his professors, documenting the physiognomy of the people living in the highlands.

Erhart first met Edgar Anderson—or Andy as he called him—in 1933, at the Keewaydin boy's camp on Lake Temagami in Ontario, Canada, famous then, as now, for its wilderness canoe trips. Erhart had previously been a camper there and had returned for the summer to help out in the "running of the thing." Anderson was there to lead groups of campers on canoe trips. The two became friends, and stayed in contact after they both returned to the Boston area. Erhart remembers visiting Anderson at the Arboretum, not so much to talk about plants, but to get some guidance from him about what he should do with his life. Probably because of Erhart's past experience in Montenegro and his ability to speak German, Anderson invited him to come on the Arboretum's expedition to the Balkans, planned for the summer of 1934. Erhart's memories of that trip are mostly vague, but he remembered well one of the botanists they met, a Professor Stoyanoff from the University of Sofia in Bulgaria:

He was probably the chief botanist there because he was the one who went botanizing with the king, Boris. And I was very much impressed with him. He seemed more aristocratic in demeanor. We went down by bus. The thing that impressed me tremendously was what a gentleman he was. A woman getting on the bus with quite a bit of luggage and so forth, he didn't try to press in ahead of her or anything. He treated her as though she has as much right to be there as he did—that sort of

thing. I remember particularly later when we got to the monastery of Rila, and one of the monks there was really quite spruced up, I don't know what to say, but he had long curly hair and that sort of thing. And I made the comment that it looks as though he had curled the

hair, and this botanist, I think his name was Stoyanoff, said in response to my comment, "It is not impossible."

Indeed, Professor Stoyanoff's casual reply to Erhart could well be applied to the serendipitous circumstances surrounding the discovery and propagation of *Buxus* 'Vardar Valley'.

## Excerpts from Edgar Anderson's letters to Oakes Ames

### Letter from Sofia, Bulgaria, August 15, 1934

"He [Professor Stoyanoff] took us, via autobus to the Rila Monastery, set in a Beech forest at the base of a deep mountain valley [see Figure 6]. We were there three days, living in a little apartment on an upper balcony. Our inner windows looked out on the courtyard, as large as a small village, in which stood the church and a medieval tower. On the outside we looked straight down for a hundred feet and down the narrow cleft of the mountain valley. Twice a day, morning and evening came the call to prayers, not rung on a bell, for in Turkish times church bells were forbidden, but hammered thump-a-thump on a long wooden plank with a small mallet."



Figure 6. Anderson photo #17422 with the caption: "Beech, spruce and fir forests as seen from Rila Monastery. Photos. by Edgar Anderson, Aug. 13, 1934." From the Arnold Arboretum Archives.

with a very low rainfall. One does not know whether to refer to it as a dusty swamp or a swampy desert. Among the ancient sand ridges there are long strips of a most peculiar forest [see Figure 7]. The topography reminds one strongly of the Lake Michigan sand dunes. Like them it has been made a natural reservation and is in charge of the department of forestry . . . The great plant of the delta is *Phragmites*. It builds the land and like the palms of the tropics is used for everything. The young growth is forage, the dried canes are fuel, housing, roofing, fences, sticks, rafts!

### Letter from Beograd, Yugo-Slavia, September 16, 1934

"When I took the Danube boat at Osova for Beograd my traveling companion, Dr. Georgesen, had left for Bucharest by an earlier train but there was no difficulty with customs or passport regulations. The parade was something like this, two forest guards in khaki with perky green hats, carrying my baggage. They were followed by the chauffeur (on foot, since we had only three blocks to go) a wonderful Czech jack-of-all-trades who spoke five languages and gave me confidential information as to how best to deal with the Chief-of-police. I marched next in the procession, accompanied by the official who spoke German most fluently, a great beer-barrel Hungarian. Behind us came the Forest Superintendent for the District and the Chief of Police (the latter had hopes of exacting a prodigious bribe for stamping his official OK on my passport. In this endeavor he



Figure 7. Anderson photo #17432 with the caption: "Rumania, Valcov, Danube Delta. Letea Forest. Photos. by Edgar Anderson Sept. 2, 1934." From the Arnold Arboretum Archives.

was foiled by the chauffeur who told me not to pay it, and by the Forest Superintendent who told him not to demand it. As a result he merely suggested it, and I replied with a very cordial handshake, but no money). There were four other men on the staff and they brought up the rear, two by two."

### Letter from Zagreb, Yugo-Slavia, September 24, 1934

"From Beograd I drove down into Macedonia for four days, using Skoplji as a base of operations. Generally speaking the Balkan landscape has looked to me like an American countryside with European houses and people but Skoplji and Pec were neither European nor American, they were pure Asia Minor. The streets were a constant circus parade. Turks with peg and baggy trousers, "Turkins" with veils, Albanian Moslems, Macedonians with white wood caps like Humpty Dumpty, Montenegrins in national costumes, set off by a pill box cap of black and red, donkeys, goats, water buffaloes, and a sprinkling of Europeans for contrast."

### Letter from the Danube Delta, Salina-Tuscea, Rumania, September 3, 1934

"The last two days have been spent on the ultimate delta of the Danube, hot in summer, cold in winter; a vast swampy region

*Peter Del Tredici is Senior Research Scientist at the Arnold Arboretum and a Lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Edgar Anderson is one of his botanical heroes.*

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# American Boxwood Society

## 48<sup>th</sup> Boxwood Symposium and Annual Meeting

### April 24-26, 2008 – Charlotte, North Carolina

Registration Deadline is April 4, 2008 and the Registration Fee is \$210.00 per person.

Please make checks payable to the **American Boxwood Society**.

Mail to: Laurie Jamerson, ABS Treasurer, 430 Winesap Rd. Madison, VA 24572.

#### **Program:**

#### **Wednesday, April 23**

Arrival at Hotel: Double Tree Guest Suites Charlotte/South Park, 6300 Morrison Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28211; 704-364-2400;

www.charlottesouthparksuites.doubletree.com  
*Group Discounted Rate* is \$139.00 per night. Rate includes breakfast. Mention your association with the American Boxwood Society to obtain group rate.

#### **Thursday, April 24**

8:00-9:15 Breakfast and registration  
 9:15 Depart for Garden Tours  
 9:30-11:00 Duke Mansion Garden Tour — Brief History and Garden Overview by Estate Horticulturalist, John Neville; www.DukeMansion.com  
 11:00-12:00 Residential Garden Tours — Myers Park Area  
 12:00-1:15 Catered Lunch; Residential Garden Tours - Eastover Area  
 1:30- 2:15 Cooper Residence  
 2:30- 3:00 Elizabeth Lawrence Gardens  
 3:15-4:45 Wing Haven Garden/Bird Sanctuary — Tour with Garden Curator, Jeffrey Drum; Hors D'oeuvres and Wine in the Garden hosted by Wing Haven

#### **Thursday, April 24 (Continued)**

4:45 Depart for hotel  
 6:45 Depart for Dinner at Charleys at The Shops at Cotswold (Cash Bar)  
 9:00 Return to Hotel

#### **Friday, April 25**

7:30-8:30 Breakfast  
 8:45 Depart for Garden Tours  
 9:00- 11:30 Residential Garden Tours: South Park/Myers Park Area  
 12:00- 1:15 Lunch at Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden; Speaker, Lynn Batdorf  
 1:15-3:30 Tour Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens; www.DSBG.org  
 3:30 Depart back to hotel  
 4:00 Arrive back at Hotel  
 5:45 Depart from Hotel to Duke Mansion; www.DukeMansion.com  
 6:15-7:30 Cocktails and Auction on Terrace at Duke Mansion  
 7:30-9:30 Dinner at the Duke Mansion (Jacket Recommended)  
 9:30 Return to Hotel

#### **Saturday, April 26**

9:00 ABS Annual Business Meeting

## 2007 Annual Meeting Minutes

The Board Meeting of the American Boxwood Society was held at the International Boxwood Symposium, May 19, 2007. The Board Members in attendance were: Lynn Batdorf, Walter Carell, Jr., Henry Frierson, Jr., Edward Goode Jr., Clifford Hoffman, and Bennett Saunders.

Meeting was called into order by American Boxwood Society President Dr. Henry F. Frierson, Jr., and began with the presentation of committee reports:

#### **Research:**

Details of Macedonia plant exploration expedition to collect *Buxus* cuttings were presented. Plans include visiting Greece to examine boxwood cuttings from a previous expedition. Cuttings are being grown at the Balkan Botanical Gardens. Prior expeditions have collected 275 specimens currently growing at Longwood Gardens and 90 specimens growing at the Balkan Botanical Gardens.

#### **Registrar:**

The American Boxwood Society has been recertified as the International Registrar Authority for *Buxus* for two more years by the International Society of Horticultural Science, Committee

on Nomenclature and Registration.

#### **Editor:**

The July issue of *The Boxwood Bulletin* is ready to go to print. The preparation of the October issue of *The Boxwood Bulletin* is on schedule.

#### **Treasurer:**

May 2006 - April 2007 year end financials were discussed.

#### **Membership:**

There are 396 active members for the May 2006 - April 2007 year. There are thirty-five new members for 2007. A suggestion was made to provide a courtesy copy of *The Boxwood Bulletin* with new applications. A membership renewal letter will be mailed to members within the next two weeks. The letter will include an appeal for all members to provide an E-Mail address.

#### **Nominating:**

2007 - 2008 Slate presented:

#### **Officers**

President	Henry Frierson Jr.
Vice-President, First	Edward Goode, Jr.
Vice-President, Second	Kenneth Lee Hahn

Secretary/Treasurer Laurie Jamerson

#### **Renewing Board Members:**

John Boyd, Walter Carrel, Charles Fooks

#### **New Board Member:**

George Schumacher

A motion was made to accept the officer and board member slate; the motion was seconded and passed.

#### **Annual Meeting:**

The board was asked by the membership in attendance to explore alternate dates for the Annual Meeting so as not to interfere with the busiest month of the year (May), for the nursery industry. The board will take up this subject at the upcoming executive meeting and fall board meeting. Dates for future Boxwood Symposium were discussed.

#### **No New Business was presented.**

There was a motion to adjourn. A board meeting and executive meeting followed the conclusion of the Annual Meeting.

Submitted by Edward Goode Jr.,  
ABS First Vice-President

# Vole Damage on Boxwood

by Lynn Batdorf

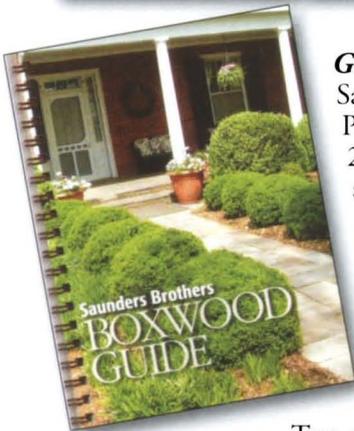
There are two common types of this small mouse-like rodent: the meadow vole, known as the meadow or field mouse, and the pine vole, called the pine mouse. Their populations may vary greatly from year to year. The dense boxwood foliage close to the ground provides an ideal habitat. Voles eat the roots and strip the bark from the trunk and branches near the ground. Most active on boxwood during fall and winter, they can girdle and kill a plant. Effective control comes from maintaining the mulch depth at one inch (2.5 cm) or less with none touching the bark. Mowing the grass around the plants can also deter voles and their damage. A young healthy cat that is well fed and secure in its territory is an excellent predator of voles.

Many gardeners are familiar with vole damage on boxwood.

It is well understood that mulching next to the trunk encourages this damage. However, in the case of this *Buxus sempervirens* 'Graham Blandy' growing in the greater Washington, DC area, no mulch was used. Also, 'Graham Blandy' does not maintain foliage to the ground. Finally, this specimen had been growing in a perennial border and no turf grass was nearby.

However, the perennials growing around this boxwood were near enough, and dense enough, to provide an idea habitat for the voles. In this environment, they will nest in the dormant and overwintering herbaceous perennials and feed on the nearby boxwood. They chew through the bark and eat the cambium tissues around the entire trunk effective girdling the plant causing death. Voles do their most injurious feeding during fall and winter.

## THE BOXWOOD BOOKSHELF



*Saunders Brothers Boxwood Guide*, was written and published by Saunders Brother, Inc., located in Piney River, Virginia. Printed in 2005, is it a 5" by 7" spiral bound, soft covered book with 48 pages and 26 full color photographs.

This handy-sized field-book highlights 20 different boxwood which have proven themselves successful in a variety of sites and landscape uses through out the majority of the United States.

Two pages are devoted to each plant. The left hand page has a large color photograph of the plant in the landscape, while the adjoining right hand page provides concise information regarding: hardiness, growth rate, exposure, soil preferences, landscape uses, pruning, unique features, substitute plants, and a line drawing illustrating the shape and size (height and width) of the plant at either 15, 25, 30, or 50 years of age. This outline format allows easy reference to understand and compare various boxwood characteristics. The inside back cover provides a line drawing of all 20 boxwood (at 15 years of age) permitting a fast and accurate selection for the size and shape boxwood at the site being considered.

Written by a life-long boxwood nurseryman, *The Saunders Brothers Boxwood Guide* provides information to properly select and use boxwood. Knowledge is power and this guide delivers. Forget those boxwood books with stories of romantic notions and lore, this "just the facts" guide is exactly what busy professionals require to quickly gain accurate, useable informa-

tion to properly select and use 20 of the most important boxwood available today.

The heavy-duty spiral binding allows the reader to lay the book flat or even fold its pages back. It is easy to imagine the owner staying close to this book, which predictably would end up in a back pocket, or stuck between the seats of a pick-up truck where it can be quickly retrieved for use in the field while raining, windy, hot sun and snowing, usually all in the same day, with soil caked hands to refer to this guide. For these practical reasons, I wish the pages and covers were thicker. I discovered that covering both the front and back covers with duct tape greatly increases both the durability and longevity of the book - seriously.

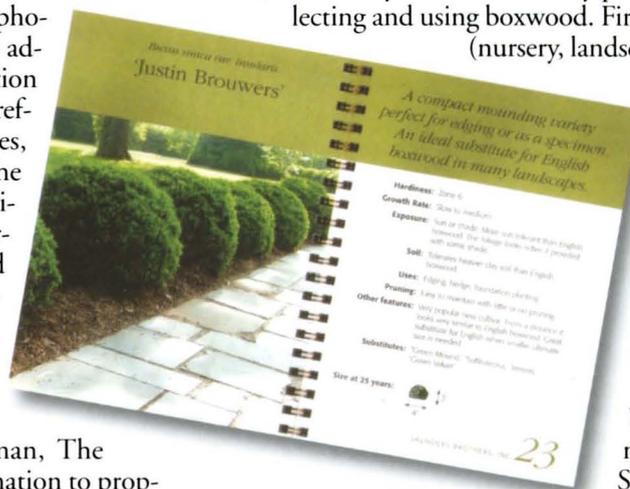
*The Saunders Brothers Boxwood Guide* is a concise, fact-filled, mandatory resource for every professional interested in selecting and using boxwood. Firms in the plant industries (nursery, landscape, and designers) often

use boxwood incorrectly. If these firms would take five minutes to review the information in this book, it would revolutionize the world of boxwood.

*Saunders Brothers Boxwood Guide* is readily obtained by sending a US\$7 check for each domestic postpaid copy to: Saunders Brothers Nursery, 2717 Tyebrook High-

way, Piney River, VA 22964. For bulk or international orders, contact Deborah at the address above or by E-Mail at: [deborah@saundersbrothers.com](mailto:deborah@saundersbrothers.com).

- Lynn R. Batdorf





## The Question Box

**Q:** I planted eight English boxwood in May. Recently, two developed a problem. I worked with a local grower and think that the issue is root rot. The books that I have found suggest that I need to treat the

ground around my boxwood with a fungicide that has metalaxyl as the active ingredient. This chemical trades under the names of Subdue or Ridomil. Do you have any suggestions as to where I could find this product or if I should use a different fungicide?

**A:** We're not convinced you have root rot. Even if you do, this would be a reoccurring problem, due to drainage etc. Thus, a chemical treatment will only provide temporary relief. Please send a description of what occurred. A photo showing the site and a second showing the leaves close-up is also very helpful. Then we can provide more appropriate guidance.

**Q:** I am researching native plants to be used on the grounds of the new Clarke County Government complex. I have not seen any boxwood listed in a Virginia native plant list, but since they grow so well at Blandy, in Boyce, Virginia, I wanted to recommend them for inclusion in the landscape plan. Can you direct me to a list of boxwood, plus cultural requirements, and mature sizes, that I could include in the landscape plan for Clarke County? I really appreciate any help you can give me. Thanks! As you can imagine, I am on a short timetable for this information!

**A:** You are correct that boxwood are not native of North America. While not native, they have become naturalized in some sites. The best reference for the habit, size, etc. of the several hundred box is the book: *Boxwood: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. It is a comprehensive treatment of box, with 342 pages, 335 color photos in an 8.5 x 11 hardback book. Please let us know if you wish more information.

**Q:** Good morning. I am conducting research on the 19th century landscape design of the ca. 1820 Montrose Mansion in Reisterstown, Baltimore County, Maryland. A 1923 article in the (Baltimore) *Sunday Sun* about the mansion mentions that the estate's boxwood had been sold to wealthy collectors on Long Island and around Philadelphia. Might you have any information regarding early 20th century demand among horticulturists for mature, old-growth boxwood?

**A:** Indeed there was a thriving business for large English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa'). They were six and eight feet in height and usually slightly larger in width. They were taken from estates, cemeteries, etc. from South Carolina to Delaware and transplanted to Long Island, New York and Newport, Rhode Island. There were a few firms involved in this. Most folded by the 1970's(?). There's lots more information, please call me if you wish to learn more.

**Q:** I am a wood turner and Boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) is highly valued for its turning quality, particularly for threaded vessels. This wood is almost unavailable to American turners from any regular sources. Some Chinese and Laotian variants

have been offered from time to time and these are very acceptable but not generally the same quality as European Boxwood.

I have seen boxwood grow in the Americas and learned of your *Encyclopedia* from web sites. I'm at the point where I am willing to begin planting boxwood with the intent to grow them to harvest in the future but am hoping there might be a better alternative. Here are my questions:

Are there any North American sources for boxwood that would be suitable for lathe-work (minimum sizes would be a trunk diameter of two inches or greater)? Can you provide recommendations for boxwood that would have excellent wood-turning and carving properties and grow relatively fast and provide a large trunk diameter?

**A:** Your question inspires a variety of thoughts. In no particular order, they are:

You need to carefully inspect *Buxus* from the Orient, from our experience it is, many times, anything but boxwood. Yes, various box species (91 in total) grow in their specific region of the world, however, their wood properties do not vary greatly. It more a question of are you really getting *Buxus*.

Your project is particularly interesting to me as a flute/recorder maker in England contacted us last year with the very same issues you are presenting - including the desire to grow his own boxwood.

The best box was aggressively harvested until 1890, when the supply was virtually exhausted. Since that era, the supply of box has been minimal. People have even dug up the roots to get at a little more boxwood wood.

The primary problem is box grows slowly. If you're near the east or west coast of N. America, you have good to excellent site conditions for growing box. The best box for your needs would be *Buxus sempervirens* 'Pyramidalis'. This cultivar will provide straight and true trunks and has one of the better growth rates. Be advised that nearly all box grow quickly the first 50 to 80 years (giving a DBH of c. 1.5 inch) then they slow down as they approach maturity. They can easily live 400 years.

To come to the point, unless you're 10 or 20 years old, it is unlikely that you would be able to reap the harvest from your planted, cultivated crop of *Buxus*. However, you could save a decade or two by purchasing 6 foot plants of *Buxus sempervirens* 'Pyramidalis' and planting them in your field. Realistically, you would be doing the planting and maintenance of this box for your children or a very young business partner.

While it's nice to learn you have and are enjoying the *Boxwood: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* you will find the *Boxwood Handbook*—a much smaller and more inexpensive guide that discusses box culture in great detail. This will permit you to maximize the grow rate of box. You can purchase it from the American Boxwood Society at: [www.boxwoodsociety.org](http://www.boxwoodsociety.org), then click "publications" for the appropriate ordering information.

**Q:** This is probably a different kind of question. I am currently researching and renewing boxwood that are 175 years old. There is a front hedgerow, a maze and an allee all located at

*Continued on Page 36*

### Future Annual ABS Meetings

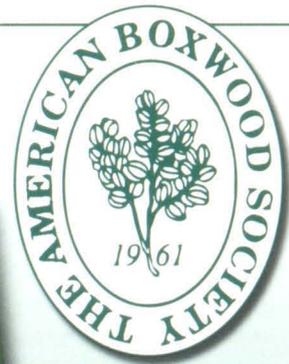
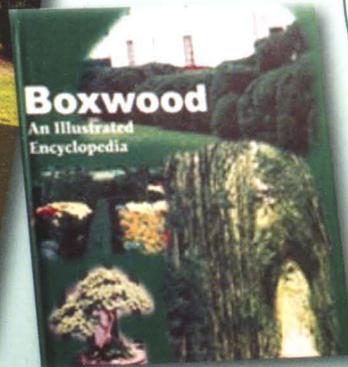
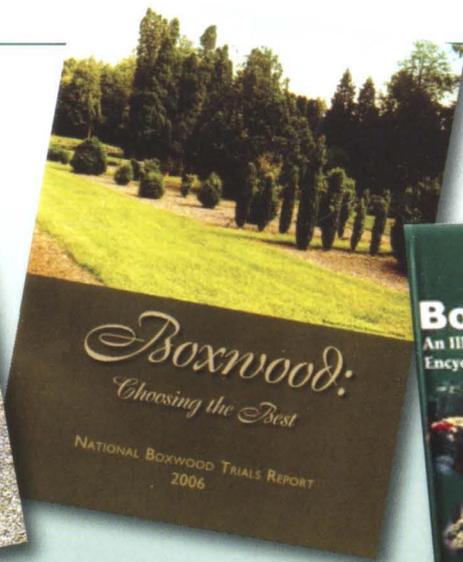
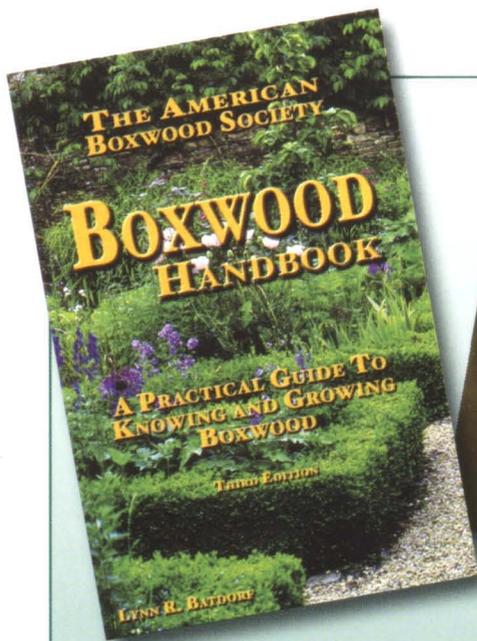
April 23-26, 2008 - Charlotte, NC

Spring 2009 - Atlanta, GA

Fall 2010 - Newark, OH

Spring 2011 - Boyce, VA

ABS 50th Anniversary



**Order Now! Essential Boxwood Reading – See Details on Page 26.**

### THE QUESTION BOX...

*Continued from Page 35*

the Mount Holly Library in Mount Holly, New Jersey. In 1974 the librarian contacted your organization about the boxwood's health and also about the maze. I was wondering if there was ever any follow-up such as the requested article for the Boxwood Bulletin. The current board at the library is talking about removing the old boxwood because it is taking too long to get back into shape. In an effort to save it, I would also like to know how many other boxwood mazes of a similar age still exist in the US? Thanks so much for any help that you can give me."

**A:** As far as we know, no article about your maze was printed in *The Boxwood Bulletin* during the 1970's.

It is most unfortunate that your board is disappointed with the time necessary to renovate the boxwood to save the maze. Indeed, because boxwood are so long-lived, they decline and improve slowly. It is a common affair to delay maintenance when they appear healthy - this is when they benefit the most from minimal care. Once they demonstrate obvious signs of decline (which typically begin 10 to 50 years prior), it requires great skill, knowledge and time to properly renovate them.

Please be advised, it is far easier and far less expensive to renovate an existing planting, than to remove it and re-plant. Yes, it does require time but consider the near constant shearing your plants need to maintain the hedge to form the maze is a serious stress inducing factor. To counter this adverse affect, they would greatly benefit from: regular and heavy thinning of the foliage, maintaining a soil pH between 6.7 and 7.5. and maintaining one inch of hardwood mulch.

You can find a definitive cultural reference by obtaining *The Boxwood Handbook*, a 123 page 6 by 9 inch book with 91 color photos that discuss boxwood culture, pest, diseases, propagation and more. It is available at:

[www.boxwoodsociety.org](http://www.boxwoodsociety.org). If you wish, please call. There are numerous questions and cultural tips that we could discuss which would take far too much time here.

While we are not aware of many old box mazes in N. America, there are numerous old box hedges - many much older than 175 years. Again, box is a long-lived plant living to more than 350 years. In a manner of speaking, your maze is only half way through it normal life expectancy. The trick is, gardeners do many things (shearing, wrong soil type, improper site conditions and exposure, incorrect culture, etc) in order to "improve" the plant according to what we believe produces a better looking plant, without really understanding, or considering, its real cultural requirements. Once this is understand and accepted, it is easy to have a thriving 400 year old box.

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