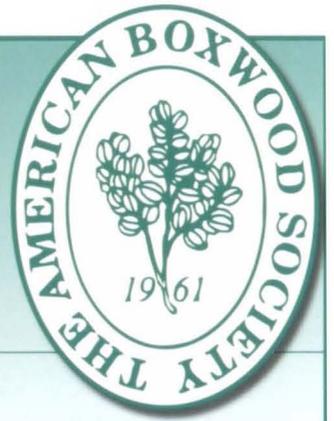


# THE BOXWOOD BULLETIN



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

Vol. 49 No. 2

October 2009



*The participants of the 49th Annual Boxwood Symposium  
April 23 to 25, 2009  
in Atlanta, Georgia*

# The American Boxwood Society

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# ABS Symposium in Atlanta

*John Lockwood Makar<sup>1</sup>*

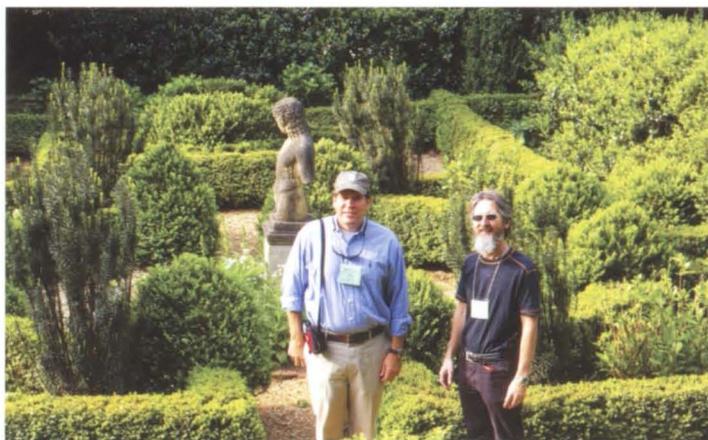
The American Boxwood Society headed south to Atlanta, Georgia for the 49th Annual Boxwood Symposium on April 23-25, 2009 and was the farthest south the Society's Symposium has ventured in the USA. A boisterous 52 garden adventurers braved the glorious Spring weather of Atlanta to see various boxwood collections in a variety of settings. Our midtown host hotel, the Granada Suites, was in the throes of renovation, but provided a safe haven to meet and explore the box collections.

Our first day's garden tour was mostly in the Buckhead area of Atlanta while the second day we explored boxwood collections in the outlying areas. We had a very tight schedule and were implored not to be late back to the bus. A melodious chuck-wagon dinner triangle was used to alert the pilgrims to our purpose, and move to the next garden. There was one ringy-dingy at 10 minutes, 5 minutes and then it was time to hunt the stragglers.

## **Dr. Robert Gilbert Garden**

Symposium Chairman, John Makar, titillated many with anticipation of Dr. Robert Gilbert's majestic weeping box above the pool. He'd seen it many moons before he had joined the ABS, and remembered its weeping beauty enough to show it to the world. We walked up

Dr. Gilbert's driveway to the side entrance and saw his re-conditioned very old box, cut to amputated stumps a couple of years ago and now flushed with glorious new growth. Everything old is new again. Many fanned out to all parts of the garden. I know I certainly enjoy a non-structured approach to garden exploration. Many went around the front of the house where there was the sunken formal four-square parterre. From here, one could see the ancient statue in the distance to draw one up and through the 1920's parterre along the side of the



*Robert Gilbert Garden with ABS President Edward Goode Jr. (L) and Dr. Henry Frierson Jr. (R) past ABS President.*



*Robert Gilbert Garden with Charles Fooks, past ABS President.*

<sup>1</sup> John Makar is the owner of Lockwood Garden, designing specialty gardens, with a focus in kitchen & herb gardens in the Atlanta, Georgia area. He also propagates boxwood at Lockwood Farm, his mountain nursery in the Nantahala Forest. This is an important source for providing Kingsville mini-hedges, spheres, cones with unusual and unique forms for discriminating gardens. John has travelled extensively and lived in many countries around the world. He has a BBA in Finance from the University of Texas in Austin, Texas.



*Robert Gilbert Garden.*

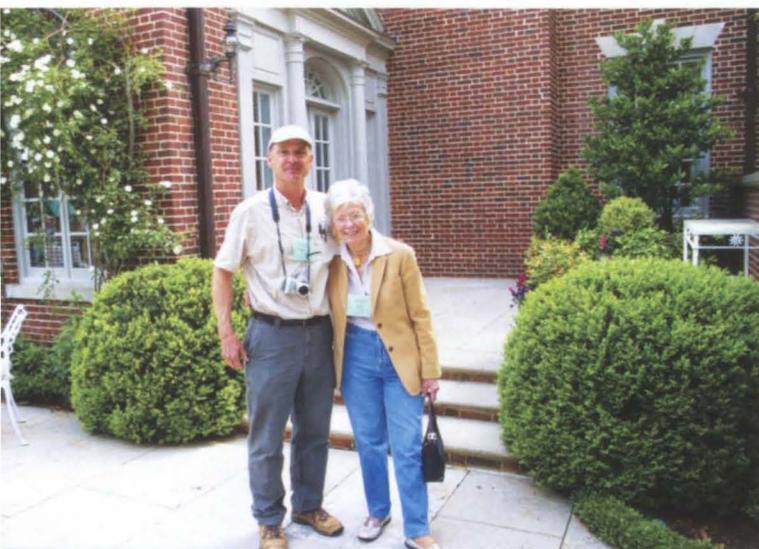
crisp white house. The white house contrasts well with the deep green boxwood with that familiar peculiar box fragrance wafting through the garden.

Dr. Gilbert's garden not only appears in the Garden History of Georgia 1733-1933, but the new 2008 "picture book", *The Private Gardens of Georgia* by Mattox and Bost. It's a great example of an old garden refined over a relatively long period of time for Atlanta, almost 100 years.

At the weeping boxwood, a crowd had gathered at that holy grail. Lo & behold, it was a false prophet...but stunningly beautiful nonetheless. Identified as *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' and cascading over the pool, it was a glorious example of 'Suffruticosa' in all of its cloud-like billowy beauty.

### **The Graves Garden**

High on a hill, we walked to the Graves garden, with many well-maintained examples of boxwood. The older English boxwood stood guard at the front entrance areas. The American (*Buxus sempervirens*) cones and spheres stood as sentinels at the corners of the beds. The beds were



*Graves garden with J. Bennett Saunders and ???*

edged with Kingsville boxwood, actually a sport of Kingsville that is ideal for mini hedges. The true Kingsville boxwood (*Buxus microphylla* 'Kingsville') is very slow growing and these are the faster growing sports that periodically shoot out of the Kingsville boxwood—like the Japanese maple's witches broom. Above the pool were striking windows framed by a climbing white 'Iceberg' roses in full bloom; we left smelling it's sweet fragrance.

### **Mary Wayne Dixon's Garden**

We arrived at Chateau Court for a peek at the Rosemary Verey-inspired knot garden of Mary Wayne Dixon. Mrs. Verey stayed with Mary Wayne Dixon when she came to speak at the Atlanta Flower Show and they became friends. Another friend of the two ladies, Ryan Gainey, designed this part of the garden.

We walked up the driveway and we were greeted by large flowering Kwanzan cherry trees. Their fragrance encompassing us as we walked through the Provençal-like motor court with its blue/green/grey herbs and gravel mulch. Its sophisticatedly-subtle use of color was understated and restrained. We arrived at the front door and



*Mary Wayne Dixon's Garden*

foyer where the contrast inside was mesmerizing. Its warm and gloriously colorful interior overlooked a large living space full of sunlight and good cheer.

Some participants lingered in the house a bit longer than was polite, but they can't be blamed because of its beauty. "But I was looking at the carved boxwood bibelots in the case." said one person. Just outside to the left, was the large windowed screen porch that overlooked the two formal parterre designs, perfectly picked and pruned and placed so that we could look down onto the knot design. Well-maintained mature beauty can't be beaten, the knots have been there for 10 years now.

Some rushed straight to be in the garden while others found their thirst slaked and blood sugar charged with a traditional Southern snack of sweet tea and cheese straws. Like small hungry children, some folks can get a wee bit cranky without a little pick-me-up, so all were perked up and primed for this exceptional parterre garden. Some of the guests found the intimate walled kitchen garden from the (inside) breakfast room view and were entranced. Most came through the (outside) gate to the box-lined beds with box-coned corners that framed the edible and herbal plantings. Either way, the kitchen garden was a gem from all views.

Refreshed, we motor-coached our way through the majestically-forested Buckhead neighborhood and ended on a truly fairy tale avenue lined with castles. Some little roads leading from Valley Road had just a simple mailbox and road while some had Buckingham Palace Gates.

### **Jane Cocke Black Garden**

We arrived at a mailbox and driveway and walked up into the forest to a white Georgian house. Graciously met in the cobblestoned motorcourt by Jane Cocke Black, we



*While most ABS members know there's no such word as Boxwoods (Boxwood is both singular and plural) this shop had many unique boxwood.*

were given free reign to explore her late mother's house and grounds, and her adjacent garden next door. The home's doors were open to allow the garden to be an extension of the house. Or was that the house is an extension of the garden? The ancient boxwood are an integral part of the whole. They frame the house itself and the views looking away from the house. Everyone scattered to explore on their own or in groups. With over 13 acres and many boxwood in the heart of Buckhead, there was more than enough for all to appreciate and enjoy. Unfortunately the house is now gone, but all the boxwood have been left. I hope they can be incorporated with the new structure. Change certainly is constant.

Our lunch reservations at the Coach House restaurant allowed a little free time to explore the grounds of the Atlanta History Center, the Tullie Smith Farm, and the Quarry Garden. Charlie Fooks explained the varying uses of tool and farm implements at the Tullie Smith farm. If he was dressed in period costume, he would make a terrific tour guide there. A radical faction broke away to shop at local carriage trade shops: Lush Life and Boxwoods on East Andrews Drive. All arrived promptly for our lunch date. The first floor of the restaurant served



*Jane Black Garden*

many “ladies who lunch” and a gift shop and art gallery. We, however, went to our own private dining room on the terrace level facing the garden. We had a delicious and genteel Southern midday meal—chilled chicken salad, frozen fruit salad, cheese straws and the “Silk Swan” for dessert (a meringue base filled with chocolate mousse, topped with Chantilly cream and almonds in the shape of a swan.) It was kind of silly but I loved it.

After our meal, all eyes and ears were focused on Lynn Batdorf’s visually rich and informative presentation about our beloved boxwood. He explained the deep historical underpinning of the boxwood placement near home and church entrances, among other things. Evil Spirits begone! This was the first time of the day that we were all together sharing a meal and talking about boxwood—and yet we had to press onward.



*Swan House*

## Swan House

Fat and happy from our lunch, we were met by the cheerful John Manion, Historic Gardens Curator and Staci Catron, Cherokee Garden Library Director near the porte cochere of the Swan House. This impeccably renovated classic edifice and garden are the epicenter of haute Atlanta. John gave us background information about the garden and told of the struggles they’ve had with the boxwood here while trying to remain true to the original design.

John’s expertise is native and wildflower plants. So our Pied Piper of Hamlin took us around the side of the Swan’s terraced front and identified plants as we went down to the lowest terrace where we could look up and see the imposing view of the Swan’s façade. As the day was heating up, we stepped into the cool modern build-

ing of McElreth Hall where the library is located. Behind glass doors, it’s a modern temple efficiently and quietly providing anyone a place to study the arts and the humanities with their vast and important collections. There are many rare and important books given from the great libraries of Atlanta philanthropists who have come and gone as the generations come and go.

Staci Catron’s passion for the collection was infectious and she enthralled us with just a smidgeon of the possibilities in our short time together. In her preparation for our visit, Staci was surprised at the dearth of information available about boxwood in general. Her selections were well-picked and thought out for our specific group. She made the point that until Lynn’s books were written, there were really no definitive texts, but she showed us the most important boxwood books in the collection:

A.A. Lewis’s *Boxwood Gardens, Old and New* (1924); C.S. McCarty’s *The Story of Boxwood* (1950), and A.S. Beecher’s *Boxwood in the Landscape* (1970).

She included some other references about box within books: Thomas Hill’s *The Profitable Arte of Gardening* (1586) about knot gardens, and Philip Miller’s *Gardener’s Dictionary* (1737) about boxwood and parterres. The two most important garden books that record great Georgia gardens were included: *Garden History of Georgia* in two editions (1933 and 1976). Fun hodgepodge selections were shown like the old Hastings Seed catalogs showing their *Buxus* entries, and some original drawings and plans of the Swan House and the Hills and Dales Estate.

Ms. Catron invited us all to return and use the Cherokee Garden Library with its now-signed edition of Lynn’s tomes. Amazingly, even the self-proclaimed cheapskate, John Boyd, generously stepped up to the plate and donated the necessary issues of the *Boxwood Bulletin* to round out the library’s now complete set.

## Bill Hudgin Garden

By this time, we had one more garden to round out our “Buckhead” day, so we went to Bill Hudgin’s Asian-infused garden to counterpoint the “classicism” of the day. Passing the two granite spheres guarding the entrance, we encountered an ancient 9-foot tall granite lantern from a Japanese temple: we were ga ga with the glorious garden. Mr. Hudgin’s 10-year-old, 3-acre garden contains over 75 cultivars of boxwood and 350 different Japanese maple cultivars. It is cradled within wooded hills and a natural stream splashing over craggy rocks and limpid pools. His boxwood and Japanese maple collections seem to be a marriage made in heaven. Ying & yang-like, they support



*Garden of Bill Hudgin showing his front yard.*



*Garden of Bill Hudgin with the ABS Atlanta Symposium host John Makar (L) with Lynn Batdorf (R).*



*Above and right: Garden of Bill Hudgin*



each other and complement each other so that their sum is greater than the parts.

Like Maria Von Trapp stepping in to support her husband when he falters singing Edelweiss, the maple's lacy and filigreed leaves soften and support the bold evergreen textures and strong structural bones of the boxwood during the changing of the seasons. While his house seems to float over the boxwood and Japanese maples, the monolithic stonework is like a plinth showcasing this graceful artistic garden. Yet it is simply the *wabi sabi* of the gentle valley garden, that make a fine partner, home and showcase of our beloved boxwood. We wandered around till the Chinese Emperor's gong let us know it was time to leave Shangri-la.

After refreshments, many didn't want to leave, but cocktails and the auction were a tradition which the par-



*Garden of Bill Hudgin with Buxus bonsai.*

ticipants wanted to keep. Even the depressed economy couldn't prevent the auction from being a rousing success. Cliff Hoffman's rocking horse rode off into the sunset and a good home. Bennett Saunder's kind gift of *Buxus microphylla* 'John Baldwin' was cherished by all and outgoing president Dr. Henry Frierson's rare and tiny boxwood from China *Buxus rugulosa* var. *intermedia* was a unique addition to the smorgasbord of cultivars. Since the characteristics of this boxwood growing in this country are unknown, it will be interesting to see how the plant responds to the various climates here in America. After the auction a spring downpour seemed to anoint and bless us for the next day's adventure.

## Day II

We met at the hotel breakfast room where we'd lost a couple of our crew, (some of the pilgrims faltered,) yet we pressed onward. A glorious Atlanta midtown morning, we even felt generous enough to go 'round the block and pick up a latecomer who missed the bus and was destined for the dog house. Since we were on our way to The Doghouse, we would deliver him there.

## Louise Poer Garden

Louise Poer's jewel of a garden, just up the road in Buckhead, is a townhouse across from a "village commons" with other townhouses around the park. It is named The Doghouse because of her faux bois doghouse that guards this flawless gem of topiary magic. I couldn't believe her assertion that she maintained it herself

till I saw the inside of her townhouse. One couldn't pay for this level of attention to detail both inside & out.

It was a tight squeeze around the side of her house with so many of us. It was so early in the morn' that everyone was polite, or maybe it was just the metaphorical group hug the ABS cosmically needs. The ABS topiary contingent naturally sniffed out their topiary alpha dog designer and fast friends were made. After the figurative group hug and doggy sniffing to make sure all was safe, some were invited in to see this gem of a garden from another facet of this jewel's radiance. Her collections of Black Forest and English Country furniture, her (living) dogs and Staffordshire porcelain dogs, even the colors enhanced and corresponded to her showcase garden through the windows. The gong sounded to leave while we were enjoying Louise and her topiary temple; it was like tearing the boy Travis away from Ole Yeller.

We motored through downtown and out to the Georgia countryside. Along the way, our bus hit a bicycle (sans biker) and we had to stop to make sure all was well. The folks partying and gabbing in the back of the bus were unaware of this drama in the front.



*The Louise Poer Garden—flawless gem of topiary magic.*



*Bankshaven with Mr. William Banks greeting the symposium participants.*



*Bankshaven's wondrous peacocks, gardens and home.*

## **Bankshaven**

From the hubbub of the present day, we came upon forest for a ways, and then we arrived at the white gates of Bankshaven, the estate of Mr. William Nathaniel Banks. Our gargantuan behemoth of a bus couldn't make it through the beautiful wisteria-tinged forest of the driveway, so we had to get out and walk. As an imaginative tour guide, and seeing Bankshaven before, I just couldn't help wondering what it would be like to come home here after the Civil War—the long walk home. The not-ostentatious, stately 2-story Doric-columned, white clapboard home with green shutters was flanked by two wings. The kitchen

and garage wing on one side and an art gallery and a second library on the other. The house was encompassed by towering oaks and peacocks preening and strutting around the grounds. We were met by our esteemed and venerable host, Mr. Banks, on the front portico, only to find out that this was actually the back door of the house.

The original 1828 house was moved from Milledgeville, Georgia, where it had survived intact (and with no vandalism!), to Mr. Bank's ancestral land in the early 1970's. It was carefully positioned on gentle high ground, though you wouldn't know it by the relatively flat

drive to the house. After a brief introduction, we came through the door. Looking through the house, and framed by the classic molding of the doorway, was a breathtakingly beautiful view. The glorious green lawn gently sloped down to a Capability Brown-like pastoral landscape with a large lake in the distance. Swans, flocks of geese and ducks were having a grand time in this natural wildlife tableau. The lake is spring fed and has a simple earthen dam. There were no major earthworks like Capability Brown usually constructed; the placement of the house shows this quintessentially Georgia landscape to best advantage.

Mr. Banks took half of our group into the house, showing us details of the restoration. The house and gardens are well documented, and Mr. Banks has written numerous articles and monographs for Antiques magazine, and other publications. I think the one impression for me of Bankshaven is the feel of authenticity; the house and garden (and Mr. Banks for that matter) belong here and seem to have sprung from the land where it stands. As one group was in the house, many were led to the gardens by Mr. Bank's uniformed personal assistant, Willie, who has been working with Mr. Banks for many decades.

Mr. Bank's father transplanted and made cuttings for many of the boxwood in the gardens in the 1940's, not only for the formal garden, but around the house and maze garden as well. The well-maintained boxwood have the gnarled and wizened maturity that augments the 3-dimensional aspect of the maze concept. The box are not clipped to stay out of the paths necessarily, but clipped due to good cultural practices.

Away from the house between tall hedges was a large rectangular pool. As one came through the tall hedge, you stepped on a dais-like landing where you could stop and look at the whole outdoor space. The rectangular pool is large by today's standards, and with the hedges and grass at the pool's edge, it framed the poolhouse at the other end. Its style reminded me of a 1920's art deco swimming

pavilion in Los Angeles' movie star heyday. One can easily imagine Esther Williams, in a one-piece and bathing cap, doing laps in the pool. Gotta keep that figure.

And lest you think this style is an anachronism and an odd choice for this southern setting, somehow it is not. It fits well with the classic, southern plantation feel. It is modern with its uncluttered and streamlined look, yet relaxing as this respite was intended, maybe even unconsciously connecting the overall place with the greater world outside.

During our visit, Amanda, the uniformed housekeeper had prepared a traditional snack of Coca colas and cheese straws. Her homemade cheese straws were sublime, light, crunchy yet fluffy and tasting like Cheddar from Cheddar, England. I didn't know cheese straws could even taste so good with the Velveta of my youth. She was badgered by some of the foodies of our group for her recipe. She politely kept mum, never giving up family secrets. Oh, the undercurrents and depth of those polite Southern ways.

Mr. Banks had an appointment with a museum director and had changed his schedule to accommodate us, (thank you, Sir), so he was off to his next appointment. After giving a few participants a lift to the bus down the long driveway, he drove over the grass and around our bus that was blocking the entrance. With his smart and fuel efficient car, he was back to the future.

## Hills and Dales

The Hills and Dales Estate in LaGrange, Georgia, near the famed Callaway Gardens, was our next important stop on our boxwood quest. Started in the 1840's and holding some of the oldest examples of boxwood in the area, it's one of the rare places that the house was built around the existing garden. The centerpiece of the estate is a beautiful Italianate home, designed by the noted architect's Hentz and Reid for textile magnate Fuller E. Callaway, Sr. and his wife, Ida. Completed in 1916, the home blends with the splendid formal boxwood gardens planted in the mid-19th

*Hills and Dales with a circular design using sheared boxwood.*



*Hills and Dales with Buxus microphylla 'Curly Locks' espalier.*





*Hills and Dales*



*At the Hills and Dales Estate, ABS Board member, Walter Carell, Jr., lovingly hugs a tree surrounded by boxwood.*

century by Sarah Ferrell, and then preserved and refined by only two generations of the Callaway family, such a long-lived stewardship.

This garden is an excellent contrast with Bankshaven since it is now run by a foundation. However, maybe because of the ladies' long reign of care and attention to

the garden, many nice details about their personalities show through to the garden: the bible verses and espaliers in boxwood, the glorious working greenhouse, the personal garden office, and the custom bird garden gate. The current Horticultural Director, Jo Phillips, worked directly with Mrs. Alice Callaway and so there seems to be an unbroken chain in the garden's stewardship. The well-maintained garden is important to our group because it shows the very long term experience of boxwood in a hot and humid climate (yes, even hotter than Virginia!).

We arrived with a delicious lunch waiting for us in the brand new state-of-the-art visitors center. We were ferried in groups of 15 to the house and garden. So while waiting, some viewed the informational video, browsed through the old photographs or perused the gift shop. The house on the hill was flanked by the old but exquisitely maintained gardens. Many of the older boxwood were sometimes ravaged by this climate (and doing the best they could!) while some of the newer cultivars seemed to be better suited to this area. There were young gardeners and interns scattered about the garden who tried to answer questions and we all certainly enjoyed walking through the gardens. Some of us didn't use the tram, preferring to walk overland to our waiting air-conditioned bus. Happy campers all—we chilled out, digested the beauty and took a quick cat nap on our 66 mile trip back to Atlanta.

### **Ryan Gainey Garden**

We had just a tiny taste of a traffic jam on Ponce de Leon Avenue on our way out to Decatur to see Atlanta's crème de la crème garden maven, Ryan Gainey. A very distinct personality who possibly may polarize, one cannot deny his genius at garden design and his use of tried and true, somewhat stalwart plants that evoke all of the senses. Our big bus broke the peace and quiet of this

*Below: Both photos are from the Ryan Gainey Garden. At right: a boxwood geometric parterre using cones.*





*Ryan Gainey Garden with Betsy Sykes (L), Mr. Gainey, and Edna Hoffman (R).*



*Garden of Ryan Gainey.*

quaint cottage-filled neighborhood and deposited us into his well known garden. A bit of a madhouse ensued as some were exploring the garden on their own and some went directly to pay homage to the master. I thought I saw one genuflect while kissing his ring. But that was a late afternoon hallucination; well, I don't remember because I was out placating neighbors who called the police on our bus that was now circling the block. (Oh, the price of beauty and fame.)

Mr. Gainey uses the versatile boxwood for his garden's varied design needs. He uses them as single specimens, topiary figures, hedges, edging and coned corners. He uses boxwood as one would a little black dress: as a classic foil for all plants, a frame for art, a backdrop for other plants or the main attraction. But above all, healthy plants are an absolute must and this plantsman's garden certainly has obviously good cultural practices. The gong sounded to leave, and we had a quick stop at the hotel to get dressed for dinner. The adage "they clean up well" certainly applied to some in our group, some even looked downright classy.

### **Adieu at the Oakland Cemetery**

We made our way downtown to Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta's 88-acre, Victorian-style cemetery, that reflects the "garden cemetery" movement started and exemplified by Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Massachusetts. This garden cemetery, founded in 1850, is the final resting place of many of Atlanta's settlers, builders, and most noted citizens like Bobby Jones, Margaret Mitchell, and Maynard Jackson. It is also a showplace of sculpture and architecture, and a botanical preserve with ancient oaks, magnolias and of course, boxwood. Our stroll from the bus into the cemetery's cobbled streets led us through the monuments and graves to the drinks and hors d'oeuvres of the Bell Tower building. We took our group photo among

the monuments. Some stayed behind and "refreshed" themselves with drinks.

However, most went on a rousing and fact-filled quick tour by the inspiringly passionate Kevin Kuharic, Director of Landscapes & Restoration. Since we have some major Civil War history buffs, Mr. Kuharic emphasized that part of the cemetery. He took us to the hilltop where General John B. Hood watched the Battle of Atlanta, and nearby lie soldiers from both sides who died in it. From that point you have one of the best views of Atlanta's skyline.

The Confederate Obelisk provides an orienting landmark. The 65-foot monument, made of Stone Mountain granite, is the final resting place for approximately 6,900 Confederate soldiers.

Nearby we visited the massive "Lion of Atlanta," marking an estimated 3,000 graves of unknown Confederate soldiers disinterred from the battlefield. The "Lion of Atlanta" is modeled after the Swiss "Lion of Lucerne" and was carved in 1894 from the largest block of marble quarried in Georgia up to that time. For the nameless soldiers, the dying lion rests on the Confederate flag they followed and "guards their dust," in the words of a commemorative poem.

Icons are everywhere, employing symbols that speak a language of grief unknown in contemporary culture. Mr. Kuharic brought in references (and factoids) about boxwood as they related to Oakland as we went along.

I had no idea the depth of the hallowed history and beauty of Oakland Cemetery when Staci Catron of the Cherokee Garden Library suggested we come here as our parting banquet. Our guide, Kevin Kuharic also mentioned that one of the main aspects of a "garden cemetery" like Oakland is to emphasize the "living" part of it, and that connection we always have with our ancestors even as we go back to the dinner table and break bread with our friends. We had a beautiful meal, with all our ancestors there in spirit. Paired with wine, the buffet dinner was a healthy fare of pork medallions and pasta primavera, field green salad, grilled asparagus, creamy cheese grits (a.k.a. polenta d'atlanta) and fresh homemade strawberry shortcake. The God's were smiling....my ipod (with its hip music) broke and we were serendipitously serenaded by birds and natural sounds of the garden cemetery, a gentle breeze and a gloriously rich sunset. We left this final "resting place", rested and refreshed, for our next year's boxwood adventure.

# Boxwood in Biblical Times

Mark V. Braimbridge, London

For many boxwood authors and enthusiasts it is pleasing that their favourite wood had a role as precious timber in biblical times. The four references to boxwood usually quoted are Isaiah chapters 30, 41 and 60 and Ezekiel 27. However, going back to original sources of the versions in English of the Hebrew Bible reveals that the biblical historical role of boxwood is not as straightforward as many writers have assumed.

## Isaiah 30:8

It is not clear, for instance, why this often quoted chapter and verse is reputed to mention boxwood. Isaiah received his call to the prophetic position in the Temple in Jerusalem in 742 BCE. His Chapter 30 was a warning to fractious Judah, which was rebelling under the leadership of Hezekiah against the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. The Assyrian empire had become overstretched and was fading at this time after attempting to conquer Egypt.

The King James Version of 1611 has:

“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the word of the Lord.”

Biblical prophets did not pull any punches! Isaiah was writing one year before the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib and he was advising the inhabitants to sit tight:

“Their strength is to sit still.” and they would be delivered by the

Lord. At the siege a plague killed 185,000 Assyrians and Sennacherib withdrew after he was paid a ransom, to be murdered later by two of his sons. The reason that Isaiah wanted this prophecy recorded was so that people should in future know, when the events of the prophecy came true, that they should have trusted in God to deliver them.

It is difficult to understand what the King James' scholars in 1605 onwards meant by 'in a table' but Webster's Bible of 1833 retained it. The American Standard Version of 1901 sensibly altered it to 'on a tablet' but kept the rest of the wording. The Revised Standard Version of 1952 differed somewhat:

“...That it may be for the time to come as a witness for ever.”

The New King James Version (American) of 1982 retained the al-

teration and sensibly changed the 'book':

“Now go, write it before them on a tablet and note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come, for ever and ever.”

as 'scroll' is more appropriate than 'book' for that period. The original Biblical texts were meticulously copied onto parchment, as the Talmud specifically required that the Scriptures be reproduced only on skins of ritually slaughtered animals. The scribes were called Massoretes and their copies had to have the exact word count of the original or they were burnt. These were sewn together into 1 to 32metre (3-100ft) lengths (fig 1) and rolled onto one or two sticks. The ink was soot or lampblack in diluted gum, applied with a reed quill.

Assuming that 'tablet' is a proper change from 'table'—Habbakuk 2:2 for instance also has, in the King James Version:

“And the Lord answered me



Fig.1: The Isaiah Scroll, Qumran, 1st Century BCE - 1st Century CE, The Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo: © Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

*The original Biblical texts were meticulously copied onto parchment, as the Talmud specifically required that the Scriptures be reproduced only on skins of ritually slaughtered animals.*

and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables.”

though it was again changed to ‘tablets’ in most other versions—but it is still difficult to understand how this tablet could be claimed to have been made of boxwood by Record and Garratt<sup>1</sup> in 1925 on the basis that:

“Boxwood tablets, with their smooth, clean surface, were well adapted for writing purposes, and it was upon such a tablet that the admonitory message of the prophet Isaiah was ordered to be published.”

The Assyrians and Babylonians used clay tablets for their cuneiform writing but wax-coated wooden tablets were used at that time, incised with a stylus and often hinged to protect the scribe’s work. Although it is likely that these tablets were of boxwood because its close-grained hardness made it the most suitable wood for this purpose, there is no direct evidence that they were. Record gave no reason for making his statement—ivory and metal were also used at that time. Nevertheless the essence of his reference has been endlessly repeated by later authors<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Record S.J., Garratt G.A. *Boxwoods* Yale Univ. School of Forestry. 1925: 14; 7

<sup>2</sup> McCarthy C.S. *The Story of Boxwood* The Dietz Press, Richmond 1950: 8

### **Isaiah 41:18**

The Bible is no more consistent with Isaiah 41. In Isaiah 41:18 the Lord is talking to the prophet about the desert but the plants in the desert vary. In the King James Version, Isaiah reports the Lord as saying:

“I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree: I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it”.

The shittah tree—its wood shittim—is the acacia, used for the Ark of the Covenant; the oil tree is probably the oleaster. The New King James Version has ‘cypress’ for ‘fir tree’ and the American Standard Version ‘put’ for ‘set’, but otherwise they are identical. The New American Standard Version 1995 has:

“I will place the juniper in the desert together with the box tree and the cypress.”

but it is the Revised Standard Version of 1952 that makes the radical change:

“I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together.”

No boxwood! It’s gone.

### **Isaiah 60:13**

Often quoted Isaiah 60:13 has similar problems. In the King James Version:

“For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, [those] nations shall be ut-

terly destroyed. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary.”

The American Standard Version is identical and the New King James Version merely changes ‘thee’ to ‘you’. The New American Standard Version alters the trees to:

“the juniper, the box tree and the cypress together”

but the Revised Standard Version 1952 abolishes the box tree altogether:

“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary.”

as does the New Living Translation 1996:

“The glory of Lebanon will be yours—the forests of cypress, fir and pine—to beautify my sanctuary.”

Again, box trees can be dropped from biblical texts without explanation. At least all versions retain the glory of Lebanon, famous to biblical writers, as to those of today, for its snow-capped mountains, its cedars, its wines and its cool waters.

### **Ezekiel 27:6**

Ezekiel 27:6 is part of a diatribe (‘lamentation’) against foreign powers that biblical prophets frequently indulged in; in this case it was the Oracles against Tyre in 586 BCE. Tyre was a famous and rich Phoenician seaport on an island and at the time that Ezekiel was writing, Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Babylonians, was advancing down the coast intent on capturing it and it seemed likely that it would fall. Ezekiel railed at the conceit of its inhabitants in the King James Version:

“O Tyrus, thou hast said ‘I am of perfect beauty’ .....Thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have made all thy shipboards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory brought out of the isles of Chittim.”

Senir was Mount Hermon, 2813m (9230 ft), in Lebanon and is now a ski area. Chittim or Kittim was Cyprus. Bashan was an area east of the Jordan, which was one of Solomon’s administrative districts—it was famous for its oaks and fertile soil. Ashur, as well as being the name of their capital, was the god of war of the Assyrians. His wife was Ishtar who counteracted his warlike temperament by growing a beard down to her breasts!

Ezekiel goes on to say:

“Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war....shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.”

***But there is no reference at all to boxwood in the King James Bible. There is no mention of boxwood either in the Douay-Rheims Bible 1609, The English Revised Version 1885, the Revised Standard Version 1952, the New International Version 1973 or the New Revised Standard Version 1990.***

A harsh prophecy, which was not however fulfilled because no land army, Assyrian or Babylonian, could conquer the island fortress. Nebuchadnezzar spent 13 years trying unsuccessfully to capture it. It was not until Alexander the Great built a causeway from demolished mainland houses that the city fell.

But there is no reference at all to boxwood in the King James Bible. There is no mention of boxwood either in the Douay-Rheims Bible 1609, The English Revised Version 1885, the Revised Standard Version 1952, the New International Version 1973 or the New Revised Standard Version 1990. The New International Version has a further difference:

“Of oaks of Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, inlaid with ivory.”

Cypress now but not boxwood. The first time boxwood is mentioned in Ezekiel is in the American Standard Version of 1901, where it appears as:

“Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; they have made thy benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood, from the isles of Kittim.”

and the New American Standard Version of 1971 has:

“Of oaks from Bashan have they made their oars; with ivory they have inlaid your deck of boxwood from the coasts of Cyprus.”

Batdorf’s *Boxwood Encyclopedia*<sup>3</sup> quotes:

“From oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of box from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory.”

<sup>3</sup> Batdorf L.R. *Boxwood: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* The American Boxwood Society, Virginia 2004: 2

Boxwood can appear as well as disappear from biblical versions! A possible reason for these discrepancies is that the American Standard Version states that its authors went back to the original Hebrew. The Hebrew Lexicon<sup>4</sup> translates ‘ashur’ as ‘boxwood’. Where King James’ and English scholars wrote ‘Ashurites’ (Assyrians), the authors of the American Standard Version used ‘boxwood’. It would be arrogant for humble latter day boxwood enthusiasts to decide on the merits of all these authoritative scholars’ versions, one versus the other. It’s a ‘Pick Your Own’ situation.

## Ashurnasirpal II

Ashur was once the capital of Assyria. Its king in 883-859 BCE, Ashurnasirpal II, had a palace which contained boxwood:

“I built thereon a palace with halls of cedar, cypress, juniper, boxwood, teak, terebinth and tamarisk.”

Boxwood was palace-type material even then<sup>5</sup>.

## Sennacherib

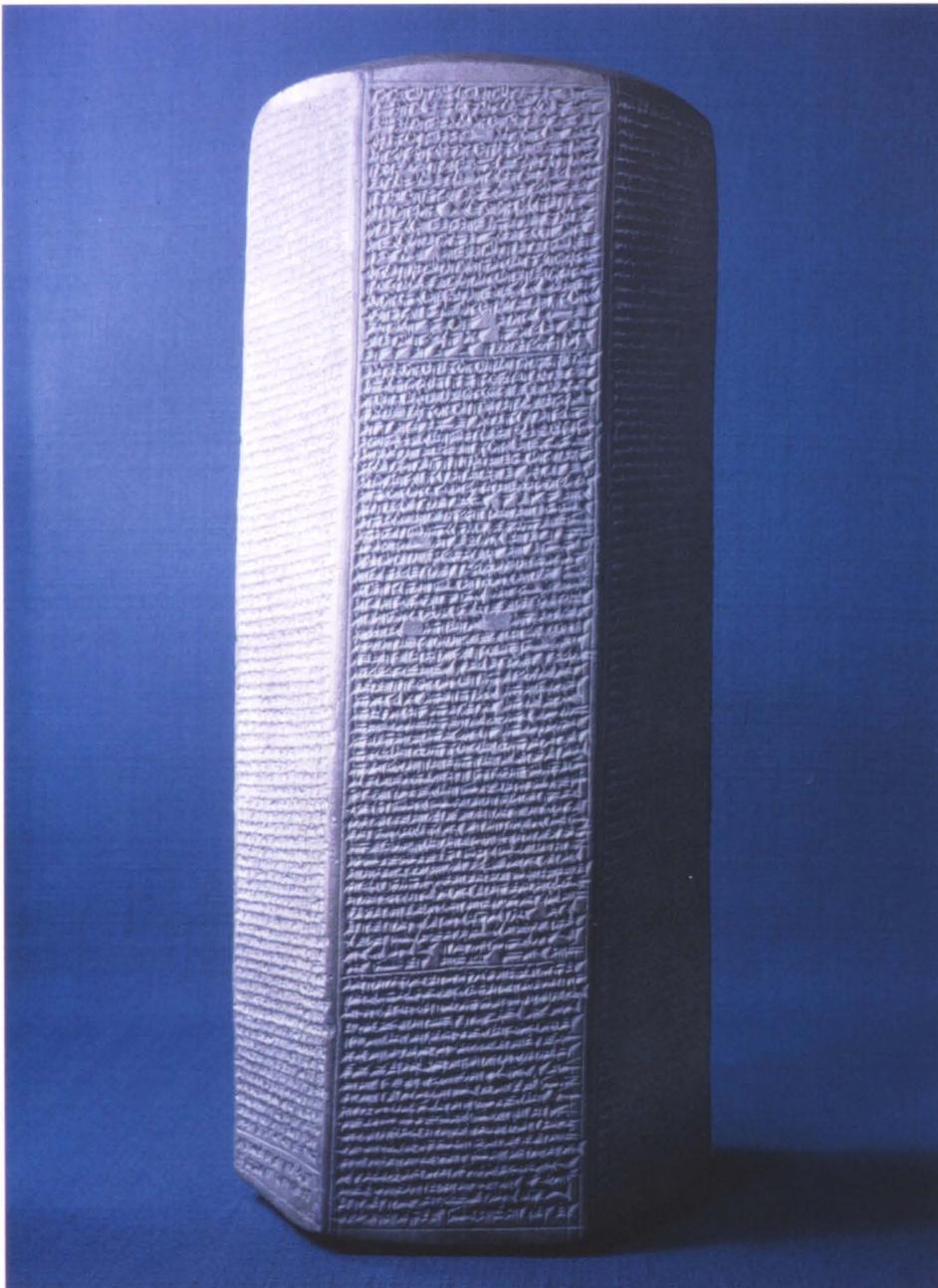
The Sennacherib Hexagonal Prism of baked clay in the Oriental Institute of Chicago Museum is inscribed with 500 lines of cuneiform writing—Sennacherib, like Julius Caesar, wrote his own campaign reports himself<sup>6</sup> (fig 2, page 28). He was not the most modest of men:

“Sennacherib, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters of the earth, the wise ruler, favourite

<sup>4</sup> Brown F. Driver S. Briggs C. Gesenius H.W.F. *The Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*. Strong Number 839

<sup>5</sup> Paley S.M. *King of the World: Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria 883-859 BC* Brooklyn Museum, New York 1976:125-44

<sup>6</sup> Luckenbill D.D. *The Annals of Sennacherib* Univ. Chicago Oriental Inst. Publications 1926: col. 2; 37-49



*Fig 2: Sennacherib Hexagonal Prism (Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)*

of the great gods etc.” He records on the Prism that he had pressured Hezekiah of Judah, leader of the rebellion, to pay him a ransom to hold off from taking besieged Jerusalem:

“As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendour of my majesty overcame him and the Arabs and mercenaries he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem deserted him. He

himself did send to me, together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, gems, antimony, large cuts of red stone (sandu), couches inlaid with ivory, elephant hides, ebony, boxwood and all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his own daughters, his harem, his musicians, he had them bring to Nineveh, my lordly

city. To pay tribute and accept servitude.”

Even in 705 BCE boxwood was valuable, to be ranked with gems and even elephant hides! In fact, his siege of Jerusalem was called off because, reportedly, a plague of mice ate all his archers’ bowstrings!

## **Conclusion**

A case can be made for modifying somewhat the biblical references in the history of boxwood section that begins most books and many articles on the subject, and which tends to be repeated authority to authority.

Firstly, the Isaiah 30:8 reference could justifiably be dropped as it is conjectural that the ‘tablets’—if they are indeed tablets and not tables—are made of boxwood, though admittedly it is likely that they were.

Secondly, it could be replaced with the references from the biblical period of the two kings of Assyria, Ashurnasirpal II and Sennacherib.

Lastly, it might be advisable, when quoting Isaiah 41:19 or 60:13, to state which version of the Bible is being used, because some versions do not mention boxwood at all. Readers with their own different versions may otherwise be confused—as was the author!

In any subject it is necessary at times to look carefully at the established certainties that have built up in its literature over the years. The fact that a respected authority states that something is true, does not necessarily make it so.

## **Acknowledgements**

*My grateful thanks are due to Amalyah Keshet of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem and Tobin Hartnell of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago Museum for their encouragement and permission to publish the Museums’ images.*



## The Question Box

### Regarding photo #1:

**Evidence:** A *Buxus sempervirens* with heavy fruiting. The foliage has heavy mite damage. Numerous dead terminal branches. Entire branches with completely dead foliage. Overly dense foliage. Leaves cut into pieces (that is, leaves cut in half and into quarters).

**Analysis:** A very weak plant. The heavy mite population is literally sucking the life from this boxwood - thus, the remaining leaves are light green rather than a healthy dark green. The excessive fruiting confirms a culturally stressed and severely weakened shrub. Lots of structural damage from past pruning practices resulting in dead terminals, fractionalized leaves, and excessive terminal branching which directly results in overly dense foliage.

**Causes/recommendations:** The overly-dense foliage has given rise to *Volutella* which has killed entire branches as the disease advances to its more aggressive vascular stage. The healthy dense foliage must be thinned to promote air circulation to the interior portions of the plant, thereby denying an environment which promotes *Volutella*.

Must control the heavy mite population. Early seasonal control avoids the exponential growth of subsequent generations later in the season, and their corresponding damage.

### Regarding photo #2:

**Evidence:** A *Buxus sempervirens* with leaves in poor health, lacking nearly all chlorophyll, and only half normal size. Only the first years leaves are present; both second and third year leaves are lacking. The leaves have a



Photo #1

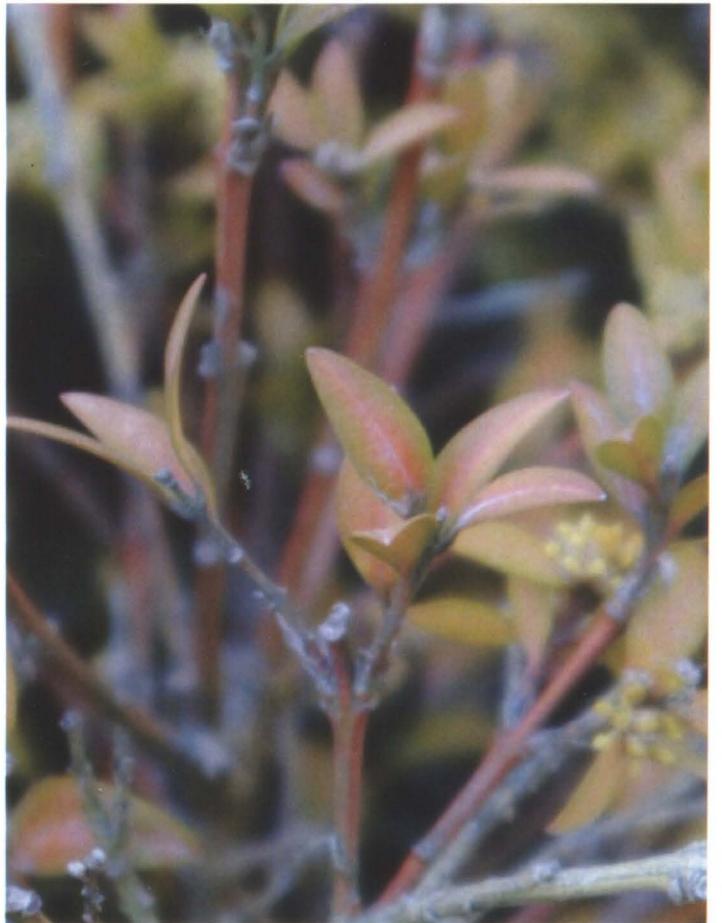


Photo #2

pronounced orange center with light green margins. Plant has excessive flowering. Young twigs are heavily damaged from both sun scald and frost injury and exhibit orange coloration. The terminal ends of all the twigs are either dead, dying, or heavily damaged.

**Analysis:** Plant has been subject to heavy and chronic cultural stress resulting in its general lack of vigor. This boxwood has no food reserves and is unable to produce normal number of annual leaves of proper size. Sparse foliage has made the young wood (2- to 4- years old twigs) subject to the damaging effects of sun scald and frost injury—this then has severely damaged the vascular tissues immediately under the thin bark.

**Causes/recommendations:** I am unable to determine specific causes in this case. Unfortunately there is only a limited amount of information which can be gleaned from the photo. It appears that this shrub was heavily and frequently sheared in the past - this (eventually) is always fatal to boxwood.



Photo #3

### Regarding photo #3:

**Evidence:** A moderately healthy *Buxus sempervirens* ‘Suffruticosa’ which has been sheared in the past and has overly dense foliage. One branch, and its foliage, is completely dead.

**Analysis:** Prior shearing has caused overly dense foliage. This has “invited” *Volutella* which multiplied and eventually killed one branch. The leaves are the correct color and size. While the plant is currently healthy enough

to recover from the damaging effects of shearing, the shearing has encouraged overly dense foliage and is encouraging disease.

**Causes/recommendations:** The healthy dense foliage must be thinned to promote air circulation to the interior portions of the plant thereby denying an environment which promotes *Volutella*.



Photo #4



Photo #5



Photo #6

### Regarding photos #4, #5, and #6:

They appear to be a close-up of photo #3.

# THE BOXWOOD BOOKSHELF



*Les buis* was written by Benoît Priel and Dennis Retournard, garden specialists in Luxemburg and Paris. Published in 2005, by Rustica in Paris, it is a 6 1/4" by 9 1/2" soft covered book having 128 pages with 89 color photographs and 32 color drawings.

It is remarkable to note the recent explosion of boxwood books written in French. This clearly indicates a country with a multi-generational love affair with *buis*. (*Buis* is French for boxwood.) While there are a few important exceptions, I freely admit that the average

European is a far more sophisticated and astute gardener than many in America. This garden culture dichotomy becomes all the more obvious when one picks up the well-written and comprehensive *Les buis*.

*Les buis* begins by discussing the history of *buis* in 14 pages. France with its extremely rich botanical and gardening history of *buis*, makes this a satisfying, educational and interesting read. The

book continues with eight pages of the characteristics, a general overview, of boxwood.

Next, is the primary focus of the book where cultural information is presented in 72 pages. It discusses: planting (soil preparation, watering, lining out, back filling, and most importantly how the shrub will mature in its site), boxwood and its use with companion plants in the garden, shearing and topiary (there are numerous examples on how this affects the growth and habit of the shrub, use of patterns to achieve unique shapes), propagation (cuttings, division and grafting), and finally cultural concerns (bark protection for standards; diseases: *Paecilomyces*, *Rosellinia*, *Puccinia*; and pests: psyllid, leafminer, mites and nematodes), which concludes with a nice table summarizing symptoms, their possible cause

and additional information.

The chapter goes on to present the utilization of boxwood, such as landscape considerations including placement, design and even labyrinths. Container use of boxwood is given in six pages which emphasizes their use with other containerized plants.

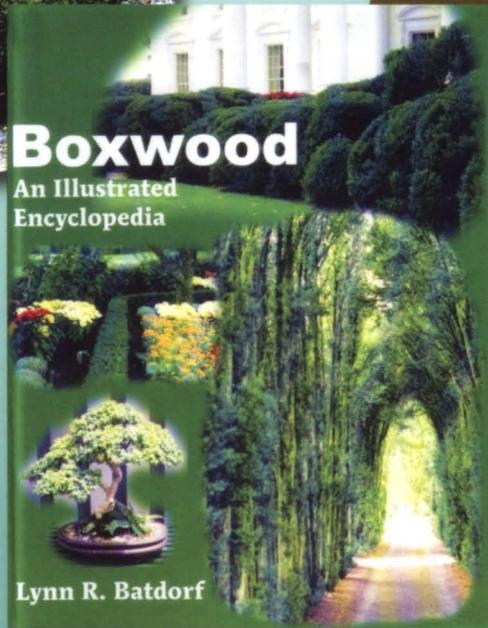
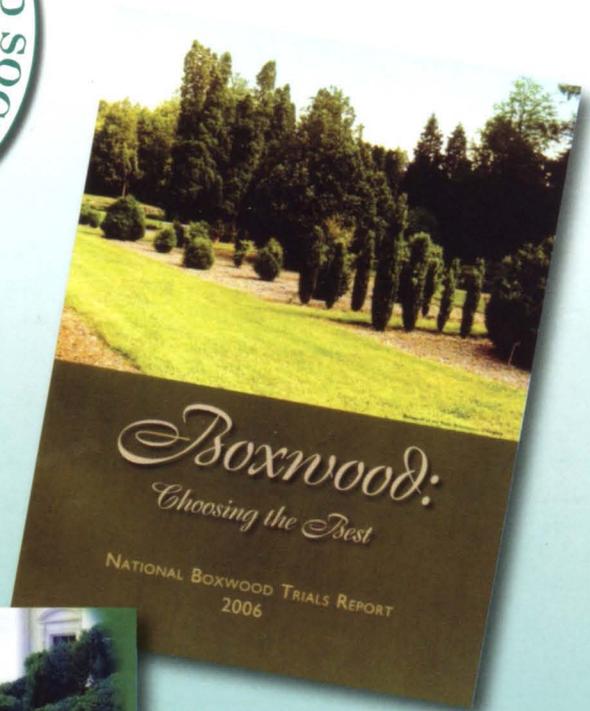
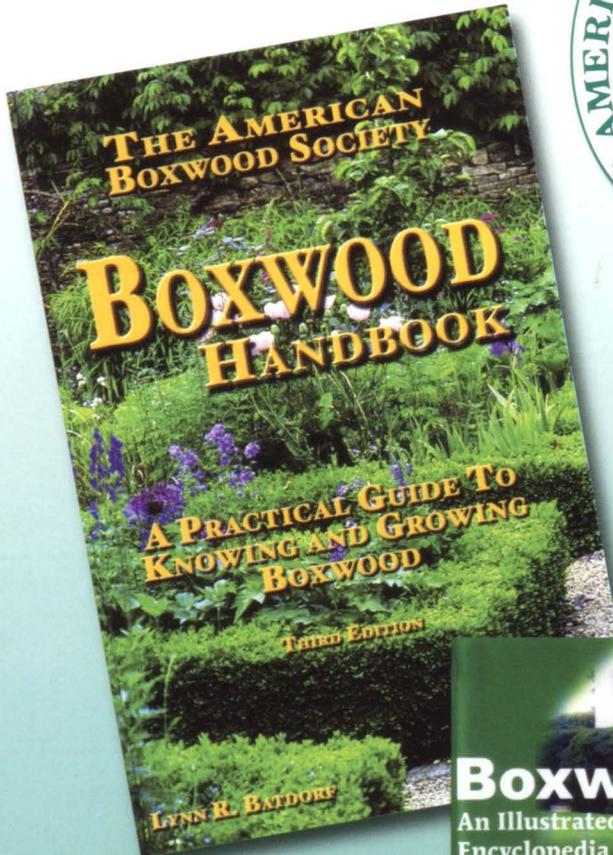
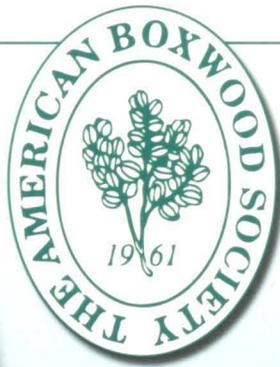
The next chapter presents 68 descriptions of *Buxus* species, varieties, cultivars and hybrids, in 16 pages. Unfortunately, only six have a photo to give the reader visual information of what these plants actually look like. The next six pages discuss companion plants in the garden.

In an appendix format, the book finishes with an enumeration of premier boxwood gardens, nurseries, two societies, a comprehensive glossary, and an index. As a member of the American Boxwood Society, I noted the society was listed with incorrect, out-dated contact information.

*Les buis* costs only 13.78 Euros (US\$20.00), plus postage. Unfortunately it required a little effort to obtain this desirable book. To explain, *Les buis* is easily located through the usual French distributors ([eyrolles.com](http://eyrolles.com); [priceminister.com](http://priceminister.com); [decitre.fr](http://decitre.fr); [unitheque.com](http://unitheque.com).) who will gladly mail it to virtually any country in the world. Unfortunately, this does not include an US or UK address. When ordering my copy, I had it sent to a French friend who then forwarded it to me. This third-party effort should not discourage anyone in the US from obtaining a copy—I really like this book and I encourage every American boxwood enthusiast to consider it. Without knowing the French language, I learned a lot about “*buis*” by carefully looking at the text, tables, captions, and well-composed photographs!

Lynn R. Batdorf





*Order Now! Essential Boxwood Reading – See Details on Page 14.*

### Future Annual ABS Meetings

- ❖ *Fall 2010 – Newark, OH*
- ❖ *Spring 2011 – Boyce, VA*    *ABS 50th Anniversary*
- ❖ *Spring 2012 – Charleston, SC*
- ❖ *Spring 2013 – Williamsburg, VA*

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