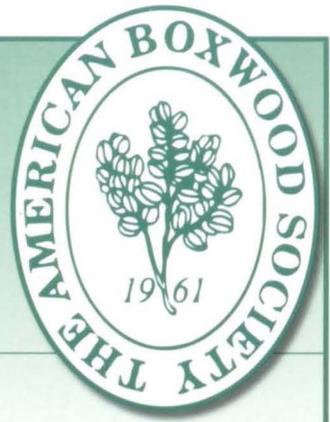


# THE BOXWOOD BULLETIN



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

Vol. 50 No. 2

October 2010



*The home of American Boxwood Society Board of Director, Andrea Filipone, was on tour during the tour of New Jersey and New York by members of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society-France. Information on this tour will appear in a future issue of The Boxwood Bulletin.*

# The American Boxwood Society

The **American Boxwood Society** is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1961 and devoted to the appreciation, scientific understanding and propagation of *Buxus*. Visit our website at:

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Be part of *The Boxwood Bulletin*! Submit an article, photograph, question, idea or report of your own experience.

*The Boxwood Bulletin* (ISSN 0006 8535) is published quarterly by the American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620.

# A Letter from the President of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society

by William Seddon-Brown

The last year, for the European Boxwood and Topiary Society (EBTS) has been characterized by growth, structural consolidation and the sheer enthusiasm of our members. As usual, a word of thanks must go first to those who coordinated and managed our organizations in the major areas - Mark Hopkins for the United Kingdom (UK), Patrick Salembier for France, and Christian Donck in Belgium. Germany and Holland, of course, are also on our map, and we are reaching out to new countries such as Portugal, Spain and Italy. However it needs to be said that the dedication of our country leaders has also been matched by the hard working support of many individual members, who in opening their gardens, offering expertise or simply making things happen, are the backbone of our success.

From an overall standpoint, in Europe, two important aspects stand out. Firstly, we are making progress with the formulation of an application for patronage, as a key cultural organization, to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. This would, of course, offer credibility and visibility, with subsequent advantages. Secondly, in line with one of our key areas for value added to members, we are seeing more and more participation of members in countries other than just their own. For example, French and Belgian members have enjoyed events in the UK, UK members in France; and French, Belgian and Dutch members will shortly come together in Belgium. Indeed, this trend goes deeper, in the sense that many members are now enjoying the international flavor of individual new contacts and friends.

In Belgium, we have now established the steps to formalize our organization as an International Association without Lucrative Purpose (AISBL) [Editor's note: a non-profit organization]. Legal entities will now exist in each country as part of our overall European presence. This year more than 50 Belgian members have met enthusiastically, with various events planned, and the activities are now supported by their own website. Or thanks in particular to Véronique Goblet d'Alviella, who, once again, hosted the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at her château at Court St. Etienne.

France, as in the past, has again been a source of great initiative and new ideas. This is reflected in the surge of enthusiastic membership, which has more than doubled between 2004 and 2009. At the same time, Patrick Salembier notes that the number of "Jardins Remarquables" [Editor's note: Featured Gardens], identified by the French Ministry of Culture, has increased from four to 35. This is surely a welcome confirmation of the recognition of the important cultural aspect of gardens and the focus of our society.

EBTS France's garden prizes were distributed this year at the Cercle de l'Union Interallié, in Paris. One hundred and forty members from different countries applauded the awards. These include Jardin de Touvet (Grand Prix), Marqueyssac (Prix Special du Jury) and Champ de Bataille (Most Creative). Sabine Bourgeois and Laurence Otton also received the Grand Prix in the category "Jardins de Ville". Also mentioned were Les Jardins de Losse, Eyriac and Brecy. Martine Higgonnet was singled out for her invaluable support with administration and editing.

A busy and innovative visit and events program for France is typified by the conference at the Château de Versailles. Dominique Garrigues, historian for the Versailles gardens and gardeners, and members of EBTS will preside.

The UK had a full and productive year, including a visit to Normandy, where members joined with their counterparts from EBTS France. A visit was also organized to see the collection of miniature boxwood carvings at the British Museum followed by the Garden Museum in London. This year the UK program includes at least one event per month, from April to October. Already a highlight was the opportunity to visit Highgrove, residence of His Royal Highness Prince Charles, where members from several other countries also participated. This summer will see the AGM in Norfolk and a trip to Belgium.

*Topiarius* remains our flagship publication for all of EBTS, and is already benefiting from a wider readership across Europe. The increasing number of bilingual articles and contributions reflect the expanding interest. I wish all members a satisfying and challenging year with our exciting programs and activities, and hope that you will all have pleasure in reading this year's edition of *Topiarius*.

*William Seddon-Brown is the President of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society. The EBTS has chapters in: UK, France, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. Mr. Seddon-Brown has graciously agreed to have his EBTS Letter re-printed here for the benefit of the ABS membership.*

# The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and *Buxus*

The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) is an intergovernmental organization with headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland). The acronym UPOV is derived from the French name of the organization, *Union internationale pour la protection des obtentions végétales*. UPOV was established by the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. The Convention was adopted in Paris in 1961 and it was revised in 1972, 1978 and 1991. The objective of the Convention is the protection of new varieties of plants by an intellectual property right. Its mission is, “To provide and promote an effective system of plant variety protection, with the aim of encouraging the development of new varieties of plants for the benefit of society.”

The purpose of the UPOV Convention is to ensure that the members of the Union acknowledge the achievements of breeders of new varieties of plants, by granting to them an intellectual property right, on the basis of a set of clearly defined principles. To be eligible for protection, varieties have to be (i) distinct from existing, commonly known varieties, (ii) sufficiently uniform, (iii) stable and (iv) new in the sense that they must not have been commercialized prior to certain dates established by reference to the date of the application for protection.

The UPOV Convention sets out a minimum scope of protection and offers members the possibility of taking national or regional circumstances into account in their legislation.

**“To provide and promote an effective system of plant variety protection, with the aim of encouraging the development of new varieties of plants for the benefit of society.”**

The UPOV Convention defines acts concerning propagating material in relation to which the holder's authorization is required. Exceptionally, but only where the holder has had no reasonable opportunity to exercise his right in relation to the propagating material, his authorization may be required in relation to any of the specified acts done with harvested material of the variety. Like all intellectual property rights, plant breeders' rights are granted for a limited period of time, at the end of which varieties protected by them pass into the public domain. It is important to note that the authorization of the holder of a plant breeder's right is not required for the use of their variety for private and non-commercial purposes, for research purposes, nor for use in the breeding of further new varieties.

The members of UPOV include the following countries: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, European Community, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia,

Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Viet Nam.

This long introduction to UPOV is necessary to introduce readers of the *Boxwood Bulletin* to recent and important UPOV policies regarding boxwood.

First, UPOV at their 43rd Ordinary Session held in Geneva on October 22, 2009 declared that the Republic of Korea, according to Ordinance N. 2009-28 of May 1, 2009, extend the protection provided by the Law on Seed Industry to *Buxus*. Also, *Buxus* in China is designated as protected genera.

Secondly, during the 44th UPOV session, in March 2008, the Technical Committee (TC) noted document TC/44/4 comprising the List of Genera and Species for which Authorities have Practical Experience in the Examination of Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability. Of interest to members of the American Boxwood Society this includes the following taxa:

- 1) *Buxus L.* – Germany
- 2) *B. microphylla* Siebold & Zucc. – Germany and the European Community
- 3) *B. sempervirens L.* – Canada, Germany, and the European Community

# Examples of Boxwood Culture

By Lynn Batdorf

The photographs in this article were recently sent to the American Boxwood Society to both identify the maladies affecting the boxwood and to recommend corrective actions. The photographs easily and completely document both the existing site conditions and the health of the boxwood.



## OBSERVATION #1:

There are several significant deficiencies, all conspiring together in the soil, which have severely weakened the boxwood. Through years of cultivation, the heavy clay soil, coupled with low fertility of at least two nutrients, coupled with what is probably a low soil pH have severely stunted



and damaged the root system. This condition is exhibited in the above portions of the shrub with two primary concerns.

1) The most advanced deficiency exhibits the following traits:

- the leaves with a reddish (dull bronze) margin especially on the young leaves
- in extreme examples, the entire leaf has taken on a golden color
- the foliage is sparse and slightly smaller than normal
- the distorted leaves drop prematurely exposing the young twigs to injury from sun scald

The symptoms listed above are exhibited on the boxwood foliage and are classic examples of a soil with insufficient levels of phosphorus. Not to confuse the issue but the soil may not actually be deficient in phosphorus, one of the most stable and common nutrients in the soil. At a soil pH of 6.0, the microbial activity in the soil quickly reduces the availability of phosphorus - by the time the soil pH is lowered to 5.0 almost no phosphorus at all is available. The actual amount of phosphorus in the soil has not changed, only its availability to the plant has changed by different pH values.

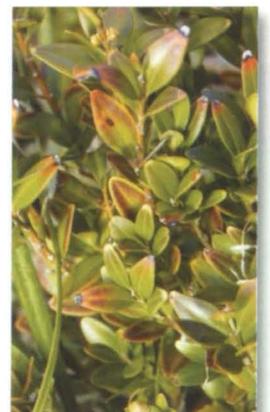
2) The second deficiency exhibits the following traits:

- the leaf tips have an orange color
- more severe examples include an ash-colored tip with orange below

The symptoms listed above are typical of magnesium deficiency in the soil. Similar to phosphorus, magnesium also begins to become unavailable as the soil pH is below 6.0 and very little is available at 5.0.

## RECOMMENDATION #1:

In both cases, the phosphorus and magnesium “deficiencies”, the first course of action is to test the soil (from the surface to a depth of 20cm) to determine the current soil





pH level. Boxwood grow best at, and prefer, a soil pH between 6.8 and 7.5. To raise the soil pH to this range broadcast applications of pelletized dolomitic limestone – accept no substitutes. The rate of application of the lime will depend on both the existing soil pH and the soil type. This information will be provided in the soil test results. If the lime is applied properly, it will take the boxwood two to three years to recover.

Follow-up soil tests, to properly monitor soil pH and nutrient levels, ought to occur at least every three years.

Correctly calibrating the soil pH values is important. Correcting the apparent deficiencies of both phosphorus and magnesium are not important at this time. To explain, raising the soil pH will allow more of these nutrients to become available to the plant. Indeed, it would be improper to make any applications of either phosphorus or magnesium at this time.



#### **OBSERVATION #2:**

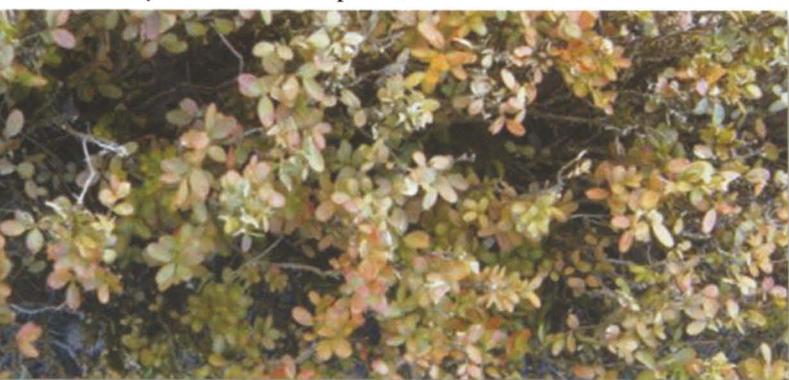
In some parts of the garden, turfgrass is permitted to grow well inside the drip line of the boxwood shrubs. In other parts of the garden, there appears to be regular and intensive cultivation of the

soil well inside the drip line of the boxwood shrubs.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #2:**

Briefly, soil has four main components. By volume soil is 25% air, 25% water 45% minerals (actual soil), and 5% organic matter. Boxwood roots have a high soil air requirement. The highest concentration of soil air occurs near the soil surface – this is why the majority of boxwood roots grow near the surface. Indeed, regardless of size or age, most boxwood roots do not grow deeper than 0.3m. It is a rare boxwood root which will grow deeper than 0.5m.

Turf grass and weeds growing near or, more importantly, inside the dripline, will consume water and nutri-



ents leaving little or none available for the boxwood. It is important to keep this area free of all plant growth to best encourage the boxwood roots.

Also, any soil disturbance, such as raking and edging, even to a depth of only 5mm, will cut and kill many precious boxwood roots. These activities cannot occur closer than 0.3m outside the dripline of the shrub.

#### **OBSERVATION #3:**

The soil appears to be top dressed with deep applications of a white, sand-like material. At times, it is mounded up to the trunk of the boxwood like a small volcano.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #3:**

The applications of sand on top of the soil, while perhaps aesthetically pleasing, actually serves to suffocate the roots which weakens and kills them. All sand must be removed. As a superior alternative, a 2.5cm layer of organic shredded hard wood mulch will:

- reduce or halt weed growth
- will not disturb the air/water ratio in the soil
- decompose quickly (1 to 2 years) which adds organic matter into the soil, reducing the negative effects of the heavy clay soil

#### **OBSERVATION #4:**

Some of the terminal, young green leaves are cupped forming a pea-like structure.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #4:**

This is feeding damage from the boxwood psyllid (*Psylla buxi*). At its current level of damage it does not appear to warrant control. Both the damage and population ought to be carefully monitored. With the boxwood in their current weakened condition, it is possible that the psyllid population can suddenly increase thereby causing great damage.





## The Question Box

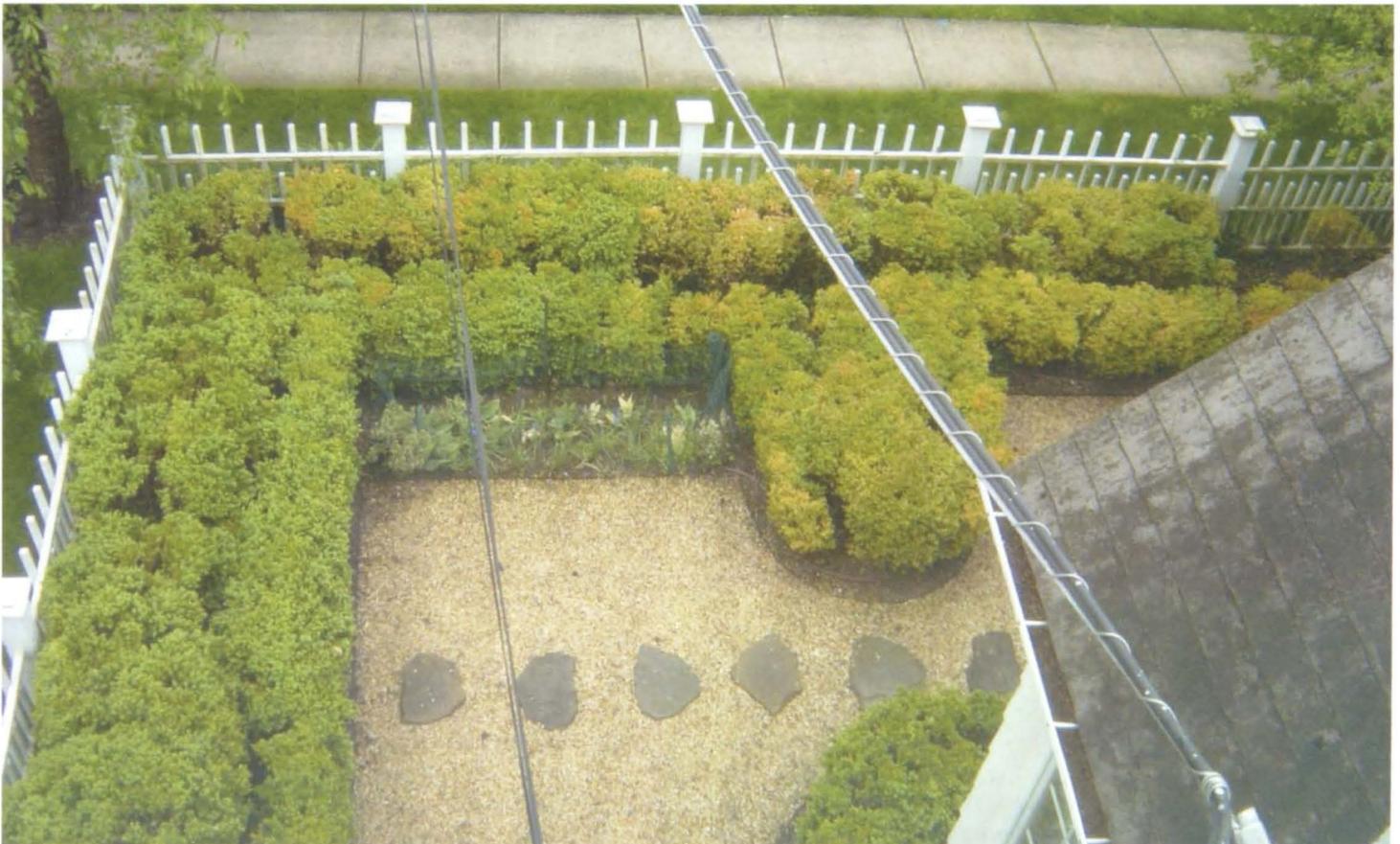
**Q:** I enjoyed reading the article by Charles Hildebrandt entitled “The Culture of Boxwood.” [Editor note: July 2010 *Boxwood Bulletin*]. I would like to underscore his warning “Do not use an automatic irrigation system on boxwood plantings.” We installed such a system 3 years ago, and now we are seeing the devastating results of uneven watering and death of many specimens in sites where overwatering accumulated.

I am a little confused about Mr. Hildebrandt’s insistence

that only superior southern pine bark mulch be used. In Lynn Batdorf’s *Boxwood Handbook*, I believe only shredded hardwood mulch is recommended. I have also heard it recommended to completely abjure from mulching boxwood plantings. I guess there are several worthy opinions out there. Thanks for the interesting articles.

**A:** Your insightful observations have touched an important question which is, “How does a person know which expert recommendations are best for my garden?”

In the attempt to utilize the best available horticultural practices, there is never one superior course of action. Rather, a complete understanding of all the site characteristics, climate, and plants, which then determines the best course of action. It is too simplistic, and often a mistake, to state that one particular plant, or one type of fertilizer, or one method of maintenance is the best for every situation. The appropriate answer requires sensitivity and understanding of the numerous horticultural and physiological effects at work. Only then could one say, “Here is the single best recommendation for this one specific set of conditions.” This recommendation would not convey to all sites or circumstances. The frustration, or perhaps confusion, for the layman is various experts presenting information or recommendations which may appear to directly conflict with another expert. This is due to various conditions being considered. The paradox is two experts with opposing recommendations can both be correct. To explain this by using the examples presented, both



Charles Hildebrandt and you share a bad experience with irrigation systems. I'm confident that there are many other professionals and homeowners who would readily agree with both of you. However, I am also confident that I could find a similar number of individuals who believe irrigation systems are one of the best technological advances in horticultural maintenance in several generations. To explain, here are a few of the most common ideas presented on each side of the argument:

NO to irrigation:

- it's expensive to install and maintain
- the distribution of the water is uneven
- some, or many, of my plants are in poor health, or have died, due to the effects of my irrigation system
- it is applying too little, or too much, water
- the system has a water leak
- I can't adjust the controller to apply the water in the manner needed

YES to irrigation:

- it saves a vast amount of water, lowering my water bill
- the plants have never been healthier nor looked better
- it's very easy and convenient to operate
- in this age of conserving clean water, it is the only responsible way to water
- it is a quiet, efficient, effective way to water

These contradictory arguments are the result of expectations and education. Those who design or install these systems are usually well-trained engineers. It is less common for them to have the appropriate training, or education to understand soil dynamics, exposure, and the cultural requirements of hundreds of genera. Thus, some systems are properly designed and installed, and others are not. Also, some owners are well advised on the proper operation of the irrigation system. Other owners are not interested or they are unable to understand the various dynamics at work and use the irrigation incorrectly.

Owners of well-designed and well-installed irrigation systems who are sensitive to, and understand, these numerous and dynamic biological and technological forces are well rewarded. The remainder are met with disappointment and even plant loss. While not lacking in enthusiasm, they often have little understanding of the soil and plant requirements, seasonal and weather variations, the difference between the duration and frequency of the irrigation operation, and even how much water is being applied or where it is going. This typically has a long-term negative effect on the plant material. It must be noted that automated irrigation systems are not appropriate in some sites. Additionally, the "Keep It Simple" approach to watering by using traditional garden hose and

various manual watering devices can be the best, cheapest, and most effective method to water some sites.

Regarding mulch, one expert recommends only pine bark mulch while another recommends shredded hardwood mulch and a third, no mulch at all. All three experts, with opposing recommendations, are correct. In select sites with certain plants, one mulch type is superior to another, as well as varying application depths, or no mulch at all. A seemingly simple act of applying mulch has vast and profound horticultural and physiological implications, requiring a specialized education and professional experience to completely understand. Few experts have the time or resources to explain the numerous technical principles involved in making their recommendations. Additionally, few laymen have the time or interest in receiving a complete technical explanation. Thus, experts present brief, apparently contradictory recommendations that are all correct, depending on the site conditions. Briefly:

Pine bark mulch is high in lignins, a strong tissue which resists decomposition while having a low mass. So, this mulch persists in the garden longer than other mulches. It does not greatly affect the air-water ratio in the soil, so it can be safely applied at depths of 4 to 6 inches around many trees and shrubs. Its low mass does not affect the temperature or moisture variations found near the surface of the soil. If placed in exposed or sloping sites, it can wash or blow from the site. It has a limited ability to inhibit weed seed germination. Shredded hardwood bark is high in cellulose, a softer tissue which decomposes quickly while having a high mass. This mulch decomposes rather quickly which then enhances the all-important organic matter content levels in the soil. Because it is dense, it generally ought to be applied only to a depth of 1 inch. It offers superior root protection by avoiding major changes in both temperature and moisture. It does not wash or blow easily. It provides good control from weed seed germination. It can cake which repels vital moisture. It must be replenished every year or every other year. Using no mulch exposes the bare soil to extreme temperature and moisture variation which can injure or kill numerous important surface roots. Plants grown in wet soils or soils with a high organic matter content should not be mulched. In an unusual example, I recommended no mulch at one boxwood site. The box were planted in an area with only 18 inches of soil which was above a large heating facility. So, in the winter, when the soil ought to be cooling, which promotes root growth, this soil was nearly ten degrees warmer than the surrounding soils. Applying mulch would have acted like a blanket, keeping the soil even warmer. Warmer soils in winter inhibit important root growth. There are many other materials which serve as mulch. The list includes: pine needles, geotextile fabric, compost, shredded leaves, sawdust, peat moss, stone chips, oyster shells, plastic, shredded pallets. Each has distinct advantages and disadvantages which make them appropriate or inappropriate for a particular site.

**Q:** I want to plant a row of ‘Tide Hill’ boxwood. Can you please tell me how far apart they should be spaced?

**A:** ‘Tide Hill’ quickly (c. 12 years) grows to 2 feet tall and a bit over 4 feet wide. So, planting them 2 feet on center is too close, 3 even 4 feet on center would be better. As the shrub ages, the lower branches tend to layer into the soil, which can greatly increase its width beyond 4 feet. So, you want to avoid this. Because it is a Korean boxwood, Zone 6 will give it no problems.

I’m concerned that you want to use it as a “formal hedge”. As the years go by, regular shearing will cause the shrub to decline and eventually fail due to sun scald and frost injury. Thus, I would not recommend shearing at all. Remember to keep the soil pH between 6.8 and 7.5 – this is critical to maintaining a healthy ‘Tide Hill’. Maintaining one inch of mulch is most helpful.

**Follow-up comment from individual with question:** I have a row of 12 *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* ‘Tide Hill’ and each is between 4’-2” and 4’-6” across. Their heights vary between 18” and 24”. It is raining here this morning, so the photo is a little dark & flash didn’t reach too far. This should help illustrate the plant spacing needs. These are planted about 4’ on center and they have been overlapping for more than five years. They are in almost full shade only catching late afternoon sun. A few years ago I used 70 or 80 plants of ‘Tide Hill’ as a mass ground cover planting in front of a north facing home. The edge along the driveway receives some south sun and these, at times, seem a little stressed.

Often only small plants are available and home owners,



concerned about the immediate appearance, mistakenly diminish the on-center distance. I always mix superphosphate (a fertilizer) in the planting hole as it is filled in to accelerate root growth using one pound for each inch of the trunk thickness. Holly Tone is a nice slow release fertilizer. The winter river valley temperature tends to be five or so degrees less than the uplands and yet we have never had damage. Polly Hill up on Martha’s Vineyard also has some, so ‘Tide Hill’ will be hardy in Connecticut.

**Q:** I have planted some boxwood under an overhang on the north side of my home. It is very open, however the sun misses the boxwood by about 2 feet. They receive no direct sunlight, only ambient light. It is not a dark shaded area. Will boxwood grow in this site? I realize I will have to water them. Also have a “liquid growth” plant food for trees and shrubs, 15-6-6. Is it okay to use?

**A:** I wouldn’t recommend planting the boxwood shrubs in the location you’re suggesting. Between the low light and no natural watering, the plants will eventually become very weak and unattractive. You will be disappointed with the results several years from now.

It is not appropriate to use water soluble fertilizer on any boxwood for any reason. Use granular fertilizer (only in fall, never in spring or summer) and only if its use is recommended by a soil test. Soil pH is generally a greater concern than soil fertility. It ought to be maintained between 6.8 and 7.5.

**Follow-up Q:** Thanks for the information. Why can’t I fertilize in the spring?

**Follow-up A:** Fertilization in spring will cause only foliage growth, which creates a weakened plant. Fertilization in fall encourages roots growth. With strong healthy roots, the entire plant becomes much stronger.

**Q:** Where can living examples of different kinds of boxwood be seen?

**A:** Boxwood are grown and displayed in many public and private gardens in the United States, but are perhaps most common in the Mid-Atlantic states. The most complete collections, showing many different types include the National Boxwood Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. and the ABS Boxwood Memorial Garden at the Virginia State Arboretum in Boyce, Virginia. Other highly regarded public boxwood gardens include the J.C. Raulston Arboretum at North Carolina State University in Raleigh and the Ruth Palmer Blanke Boxwood Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis.

**Q:** I am looking for an essential oil of the boxwood fragrance. Might you know where I can find one?

**A:** You may know that the leaves have been utilized for medicinal applications (not recommended). The various boxwood alkaloids (nearly 50) have produced several medical applications. In one example, the Belgians are using an extract from the oil found in the wood as a cancer treatment. In this case, the extract contains the alkaloid cycloprotobuxine, which has been shown to promote anti-cancer activity.

Boxwood oils, to the best of my knowledge, have not been utilized simply for their fragrance. This includes the cinnamon-like fragrance of the flowers as well as the bittersweet aroma of the leaves.

**Q:** We planted nine boxwood in April of this year. One by one they have gotten light green leaves becoming almost neon and some have a brown tip. All the boxwood have done this except two which have stayed a dark green. I called a nursery and was told they should not be changing color. Do you have any advice? We have not fertilized the shrubs. They cost a lot and we do not want them to die.

**A:** Spring is the least advantageous season to plant boxwood. However, I doubt that's the cause of your dead plants. If the foliage is very dense (typical from nursery grown plants), look in the interior of the shrub. You're looking for small dark brown spots on the upper or lower surface of the brown interior leaves. Also, you're checking for a thin film of pink fuzz on the underside of the leaves. It's likely you have one or the other, or even both.

Both of these diseases are caused by overly dense foliage. Planting these disease weakened shrubs in spring creates undue stress resulting in the death of entire branches as the disease advances from a leaf fungus to a twig fungus. At this point, sanitation becomes a primary concern - you ought to remove the plants and any disease infected leaves found on the soil surface. Regarding the two healthy boxwood, they ought to be thinned as soon as possible, and also every fall. Please review this link for thinning instructions:

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/BoxwoodThinning.html>

Newly planted shrubs, including boxwood, should not be fertilized. Additionally, boxwood should never be fertilized in the spring. Please have your soil tested first to determine if fertilizer is even necessary (many times it is not). The correct soil pH (6.8 to 7.5) is, generally, a far more critical concern for boxwood than is soil fertility.

**Q:** Can you suggest a weed killer I can use that will not harm my English boxwood? Several years ago I planted approximately 50 dwarf English boxwood surrounding a circular driveway and mulched them with red brick chips. I've been weeding them by hand, but the weeds seem to come back stronger and more prolific each year. After recent rains this year I've got several weeds that are outgrowing the boxwood. I used some Preen near some of the boxwood one year but

without good results for either the weeds or the box. I've also tried flaming the weeds with my Weed Dragon propane torch, but that requires screening the boxwood totally from the heat which is almost impossible. I'm considering using a mattock to dig up all of the weeds, scrape the brick chips away and put garden fabric down and then replace the brick chips, but that will be a monumental task considering the large circumference of my circle; even if I do that it would be nice to know if there is a safe herbicide that I can use in conjunction under the fabric.

**A:** Well, the real problem is your decorative brick chip mulch. This material will not stop weed growth, it does not retain moisture, it does not decompose and add important organic matter to the soil. It does retain heat, which then weakens or kills plant roots. It has only one good attribute - it looks good in some sites. I assume you live in the USA, but you don't say. If you provide me with the city, state or country in which the boxwood are located, I can give you specific recommendations based on your local climate.

**Follow-up Q:** I live in the greater DC region, in the Falling Waters area of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, about 10 miles south of Hagerstown, Maryland. Here are further details about the boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa') specific planting environment: they are in full sun on the Eastern side of the house. Our lot is three acres in size and for the most part is bordered by mature Eastern white pines which do provide some shade for the boxwood, but only in the morning. I planted the boxwood about 3' apart in a large circle bordering the outer edge of a circular bluestone gravel driveway. When I originally planted them about 4-5 years ago, I did not put down any weed control fabric, but I did cover them with a couple of inches of organic wood chip mulch. About a year later we covered the organic mulch with the red brick chips, mostly for aesthetic reasons as we liked the color contrast with the bluestone of the driveway and the grass on the other side of the boxwood border, but also because I had read that boxwood did not like to be heavily mulched with organic mulch - it was my understanding that because boxwood have shallow roots, organic mulch could/would lead to the roots rotting. Most of that original organic mulch layer is still in the border, although much of it has decomposed into the soil. Although we had to replace a few of the boxwood early on due to drought, they are doing well.

I am now having increased problems keeping the weeds at bay. Because we live in a karst limestone aquifer region, and have a private well, I've only been willing to use yard chemicals very sparingly, which is why I've mostly hand weeded or else used a weed flamer where I could without harming my desired plants. At this point though, looking at the size and diversity of my weed crop, I need a better control solution, hence my thoughts to install garden fabric and find an herbicide that I could apply sparingly that won't

harm the boxwood. Any good suggestions there will be greatly appreciated.

From your comment on the red brick chips retaining too much heat and leading to a weakened root structure, it sounds like we should not be using them. If we want to retain the red color, are there any environmental concerns with using red dyed organic mulch? Does red mulch also retain additional undesirable heat? If we want to keep the stone look, what about replacing the brick chips with either white marble chips, pinkish buff colored stone, or oyster shells - something lighter in color? If we retain a stone base, should I be fertilizing? If I can find oyster shells, do they return anything of value to the soil?

**Follow-up A:** Contrary to what you've been led to believe, organic mulch (shredded hardwood bark) is very desirable for boxwood. Apply it only one inch deep. This mulch does not encourage root rot, it does effectively protect boxwood roots from the damaging effects of temperature and moisture extremes. Particular to your needs, this mulch will also halt or greatly reduce weed growth, something that brick chip mulch cannot do. The few weeds that do grow through the mulch can and be easily hand pulled, or flamed.

Yes indeed, there are specialty organic mulches that have a red dye, as well as a variety of other colors. I would not recommend white marble chips or colored stone as a mulch. These cannot protect the boxwood roots nor will they effectively halt weed growth without chronic herbicide treatments or endless hand weeding.

The oyster shells, however, will nicely compliment your high soil pH. You will have to spray some weeds or spend some time hand weeding. The root protection of this material is better if you use pieces, not whole shells. It must be applied between one and two inches thick.

On a different, but important note, please realize that the foliage of English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' must be thinned in late fall. This should be done every year, or every other year.

**Q:** I work at a garden center located in central Virginia. A customer was told to use Epsom salt at the time of planting English boxwood. After a couple week they all died. Would you ever recommend planting boxwood with Epsom salt? Can it be the cause of the boxwood's death?

**A:** Epsom salt is in reality, magnesium sulfate, a micro-nutrient. Extremely small quantities are required by most plants to produce chlorophyll (green cells) which is necessary for their survival. Like any other micro-nutrient, it should never be applied before completing soil test and analysis, nor without a thorough understanding of both plant physiology and the symptoms which the plants are exhibiting.

I've watched the use of magnesium sulfate increase greatly through the past several decades, to the point where laymen use it indiscriminately to solve a large variety of plant maladies. In the vast majority of these cases, application of magnesium sulfate is inappropriate and often, with both the timing and amount of application, can have fatal results.

The application of Epsom salts may or may not be responsible for the death of the boxwood. There are many important variables which must be considered before any direct cause/effect relationship can be established. A few include:

- existing soil nutrient and soil pH level
- time of, and amount of Epsom salt applied
- various site planting conditions, to include post care
- health and condition of the plant prior to planting

What I'm alluding to, is the box may have died because it wasn't planted in an appropriate site, perhaps wasn't watered correctly, etc. This important information isn't provided.

Also the existing soil conditions, the timing and rate of Epsom salt application are also not provided. Thus, while the application of Epsom salts is generally inappropriate, and can be injurious, it is possible that your box died from other conditions relating solely to the transplanting.

*Contrary to what you've been led to believe, organic mulch (shredded hardwood bark) is very desirable for boxwood. Apply it only one inch deep.*

#### Annual Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

1. Publication Title: The Boxwood Bulletin
2. Publication number: 0006-8535
3. Filing Date: September 15, 2010
4. Frequency of issue: Quarterly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: Four
6. Annual Subscription Price: US\$35
7. Complete mailing address of office of publication:  
The American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620-0085
8. Complete mailing address of the headquarters or general business:  
The American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620-0085
9. Names and addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor:  
Publisher: Winchester Printers Inc., 212 Independence Drive, Winchester, VA 22602  
Editor: Publications Committee, American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620-0085  
Managing Editor: None.
10. Owner: The American Boxwood Society, P.O. Box 85, Boyce, VA 22620-0085
11. Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None.
12. Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months.
13. Publication Title: The Boxwood Bulletin
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data: July 2010, Vol. 50, No. 1
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Devoted to the appreciation, scientific understanding and propagation of Buxus.
  - a. Total Number of Copies: 360
  - b. Paid Circulation
    - (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions: 321
  - c. Total Paid Circulation: 321
  - d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: None
  - e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution: None
  - f. Total Distribution: 321
  - g. Copies not Distributed: 39
  - h. Total: 360
  - i. Percent Paid: 100%
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Will be printed in the October 2010 issue.

# Minutes of the ABS Board Meeting – March 18, 2010

The Board of Directors of the American Boxwood Society met at Blandy Farm in Boyce, VA and was called to order on March 18, 2010 at 12:40pm. In attendance were: President Edward Goode, First Vice-President Lee Hahn, Second Vice-President John Boyd, Secretary/Treasurer Laurie Jamerson, Registrar Lynn Batdorf. Directors: Joan Butler, Walter Carell Jr., Dean Norton, Bennett Saunders, Andrea Filipone, Clifford Hoffman, Jan Carter and ABS Executive Director Jeff Miller. Introduced were: Curator Tai Raulston, Director David Carr, Director and Grounds Supervisor Bob Arnold, all of the Blandy Arboretum. Absent: Henry Frierson, Charles Fooks, and George Schumacher.

President Goode began the meeting by asking if a quorum was present - it was noted that a quorum was present. He noted that there is a need to focus on a long term perspective for the ABS. An electronic survey completed by Jeff Miller will collect information directed to the boxwood needs of professionals.

Vice-President Lee Hahn acknowledged the support by Saunders Brothers in funding the ABS booth and supplying plants at both MANTS and the NJ Flower Show. Walter Carell added that Saunders had also assisted in the display set-up at MANTS. Directors Jan, Dean, Andrea, Walter, Lee, and Eddie, along with Robert and Paul Saunders assisted manning the booth.

Jan asked if there was a tracking of sales and members generated at the shows. Lee noted that there was a lot of traffic at both shows, but a 'membership drive' opportunity was not there. Andrea said MANTS was a better target for our funds and we should focus on that show. Lynn gave a one-hour presentation at NJFS.

**Communications** — Lee Hahn reported that Ralph Sodsmith from NYC now resides in Staunton, VA. He has a radio program which focuses on plant questions. An outreach to Sodsmith could result in promotion for the ABS in this radio program.

**Books** — John Boyd made a MOTION to deposit all revenue from book sales into the Publishing fund for future reprinting expenses. He reported that book reprinting will soon be necessary. In his motion, Jeff Miller should separate wholesale orders from retail sales. Other reprinted material included the complete *Boxwood Bulletin*

from 1961-2010. Joan offered any issue which may be needed for photocopying. The cost to reprint the *Boxwood Encyclopedia* is expected to be less than the original printing. Lynn noted that the number of copies would be a primary factor in printing costs. Eddie asked John to withdraw his motion as book sales are necessary to support ABS general operations. Eddie commended John on selecting packaging and shipping to reduce mailing costs and including applications for memberships in each order. John explained how one sheet of paper added to each mailed book could increase the mailing costs by \$1.75. John has been using printed notes from Decca Frackleton. Joan also had a complete set. John requested that an Inaugural Issue to be given to new members. Walter inquired about the cost of printing of that proposal.

**MOTION** — by John, include correspondence with book sales to encourage new members. Discussion — Jan asked if trifolds could be inserted in book orders. It was noted that they could be inserted into the *Handbooks* but not the *Encyclopedia*. Amended MOTION - John to continue to include correspondence with book sales to encourage new members. Motion was second by Joan. A vote by the board approved the motion.

Andrea asked if MANTS had been effective, and how much was spent on handouts. Walter observed the number of visitors to the booth was reaching professional contacts. Andrea asked if there had been an increase on the ABS website visits. Jeff noted a trend of increased traffic after the recent trade shows, which is up from January-February 2009. He noted that 55% of ABS searches originated from Google. They first view the ABS homepage, then the FAQ's. Andrea suggested an Amazon connection and Jeff said that could be done. Lee suggested that this effort occur in a separate work session rather than this Board meeting. Lynn said this could be a concern if the limited book supplies cannot meet the demand.

**Finances** — Eddie stated that Jeff was hired to assist in the financial functions of ABS and his reports need 2 years to obtain conclusive information. Since 2004, Eddie has organized all Annual meetings and assured the board that the ABS has always been able to break even or make a small

profit. Bennett strongly recommended an accountant complete a formal budget. Eddie wants Jeff to do this as part of his responsibilities and noted that he should proceed. Laurie discussed the need for funds to continue to supply books as that is directly responsible for supporting the ABS. Eddie said the ABS needed to hire Jeff Miller because of our increased book sales and financial reports. Eddie said we need to vote on this and moved this discussion to new business in meeting.

Laurie said more book sales are being made on web site and the volume of mail picked up and forwarded from Blandy Post Office has been considerably less. John had an increase in number of shipments around the holidays.

Jeff said ABS needs a long range plan, 5-10 years out. ABS should make money on Annual meetings. He gave an example of VNLA event which sold out. ABS needs to put more advertising into promoting events. Jeff suggested there be non-member fees on all events, registration forms on line, put online information for members with member-only access code and charge for hard copy.

**Membership** — Andrea reported 270 members. There were 500 renewals sent out with a 50% response rate. She needs names to solicit from the board, targeting businesses and professionals. Also she feels this approach is more beneficial than trade show energy expenses. Three letters need to be generated. One to become a member, another for existing, and a third for renewals. E-Mail quarterly newsletter is a way to keep in touch with the membership. Andrea wants ideas of value added to become a member, access code on web to divide general public from members. Andrea would like resolution on member/non-members access to web site. Jeff said a user name and master user changes annually. Prices on books should also reflect non-member and member advantage. Joan suggested the Encyclopedia be \$110 for members and \$125 non-member, with \$15 postage on either order, while the Handbook be \$22 for members, \$30 non-members which \$5 postage on either order. Joan also suggested pricing the annual symposium with non-member/member advantage. Dean felt you must be a member to attend and membership price could be added on registration forms.

**Work Schedule** — Blandy is having an event in May and the gardens need attention, this to be added to new business.

**Registrar** - Lynn passed around the book: *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* now in its 8th edition released in November 2009. He is working on three pending registrations.

**Editor** — The ABS has a need for a new editor beginning with the April 2011 issue of the *Boxwood Bulletin*. Laurie asked printing cost setup, Andrea wanted pdf so we have option to go to another printer. About 80% of the dues should cover the printing costs, but this is not the case. It is well over 100%. Reducing the frequency, from 4 issues per year, will not keep membership informed. Andrea noted that an E-newsletter could fill void and selling ads to supplement costs. Laurie suggested two hard copy bulletins and bi-monthly E-newsletters. Jeff noted that E-Mail in other organizations are opened by 35% and of those 50% view a hyperlink.

**Memorial Garden** — Walter will set up another work date before May 1, 2010 to prepare the gardens for upcoming events at Blandy. Joan and Andrea would like to see a learning workshop offered at some of these work dates. Dean has time constraints and will not be able to assist. Bennett suggested splitting up a fall and spring clean-up with Dean. Walter will set up a meeting with David Carr (Blandy Director) and report back to board.

**Annual Meeting** — Ohio, October 15-16, 2010. Suggested cost \$200-225 per person with costs at about \$194. \$250 per person was agreed by board. Rich Larson has requested Mike Yancy be a speaker for meeting. The 2011 meeting may also take place in the fall.

Joan commented that the 50th anniversary meeting of the ABS ought to be in Spring 2011.

**Nominating Committee** — Eddied called an Executive Board meeting to select a chairman for the committee. Walter Carell was nominated, second by Lee Hahn approved by board. Carell presented Charlie Fooks and Les Hoffman as members of his committee for director terms and officer selection for Annual meeting vote. Eddie had handout of the 2009 committees (8) which will need chairmen as well.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Board Minutes** — It was requested minutes be distributed within 30 days of meetings to all board members by E-Mail, and mailing a copy to those without computers.

**Annual Meeting** — With the Annual meeting more than 6 months after the beginning of the fiscal year, the officer and director terms expiring May 1st could not be voted on by the general membership unless a mailing was done and a ballot committee established. Walter asked what about the lengthened current term and shortened term until next May, and Lee asked officers and directors to agree to serve until October. MOTION- Walter with his committee will set slate of nominations to fill all expiring terms of officers and directors and it will be voted on at the October Annual meeting with their term ending in May 2011. Terms will then return to fiscal year, May to April. Second Joan. Motion carried. Walter will prepare a slate.

**Social Media** — Eddie discussed current trends, facebook, blogger.com, twitter and wants to start a facebook account for ABS with boards' permission. Andrea shared it had a snowball effect and explained how it worked. Eddie suggested everyone experience facebook.

**Securing New Gavel** — Eddie asked if anyone can donate boxwood for a new gavel. Les has wood and offered to make a gavel and pad. He requested building dimensions to follow so he can start immediately to have ready for October meeting.

**Directors Insurance** — Eddie expressed the need to secure general liability insurance for our organization. MOTION - obtain a general liability policy from Auto Owners Insurance Co., proposed annual cost \$235-\$261. Second Joan, motion carried by board.

**Website** — Lynn indicated the web site needs to be updated. Jeff and Lynn will work on this project. Lee is concerned with the design and board approval should be involved in what we want to offer. Lynn agreed and parts of articles/books can be used as teasers to join ABS and get full story with membership.

**Winchester Garden** — Joan passed

around a letter and diagram to restore Handley Library Children's Garden in Winchester, VA. Eddie asked if boxwood were still in the existing garden and they were. Jan asked if there was a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations - there is none. Joan asked the board to empower her to approach library to offer input herself and it was accepted.

**Annual Book and Merchandise count** — John Boyd made a MOTION - keep an accounting of merchandise and books which are held by board members and report sales in a timely manner. Discussion - there are various display items on loan for shows making inventory difficult. Second by Andrea, passed by board

**EBTS** — Andrea is co-chairing an EBTS-France tour in NYC October 3-8. All are invited to join the tour. There are associated fees in attendance. It will be an exciting tour.

**Mailing costs** — A previous motion to mail information to new members had not anticipated the cost. Lee inquired about sending the information by E-Mail. Lee MOTION - to authorize expenditures of \$1500 for purposes to reach expired and possible new members from the generated list. Second Joan, Carried by board.

**Finances** — Eddie asked for MOTION - One individual to manage all finances which would be reviewed by an elected official. Jan requested discussion in an Executive session and Eddie asked Jeff to be excused. Eddie opened discussion of Executive Directors. Laurie MOTION - Add Jeff Miller to BB&T signature card, second Lynn, carried by board. Jan's MOTION - Board of Directors engage services of Horticultural Management Associates per contract agreement on calendar basis, approve rate of contract with advance notice, second John, carried by board.

Returning to a regular Board session, there was discussion regarding the ABS Credit Card Machine Account. Lee requested the account be closed to save monthly fees since Jeff Miller could process the charges on line. The credit card slide will be used to make imprints of cards at shows and events for record keeping purposes. MOTION - To terminate credit card machine processing account at BB&T, second Jan, carried by board. A supply of CC carbonless slips should be on hand for

future events. Jeff restated a large balance in the checking account could be put into money market fund to earn interest for ABS as well and be more liquid than a CD.

**Board Meeting** — Discussion on a September Board meeting with the Annual meeting the following month of October, the Board of Directors has tentatively set

a June 17, 2010 meeting date to be held at Blandy, beginning at noon.

There will be a business meeting scheduled for the Board before the start of the Annual symposium in Ohio. Eddie will be making arrangements for a location to meet, and notify board. In the fall of 2011, the board is planning to meet in the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.

With no further business Lee motioned, second by Joan, carried by board and meeting was adjourned at 6:35p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Laurie Jamerson*

*Secretary, American Boxwood Society*

## *Minutes of the ABS Board Meeting – June 24, 2010*

The meeting was called to order by President Eddie Goode who confirmed that a quorum was present with the following in attendance: John Boyd, Joan Butler, Walter Carell, Jan Carter, Charlie Fooks, Henry Frierson, Eddie Goode, Lee Hahn, Jeff Miller, and Dean Norton.

**President's Remarks** — Eddie Goode announced the resignation of Laurie Jamerson as Secretary and recognized her for her many years of dedicated service to the American Boxwood Society. A letter will be sent to Mrs. Jamerson acknowledging her work and thanking her for her commitment. Bennett Saunders was announced as the new treasurer.

**Minutes** — Board Members approved the minutes from the March 18, 2010 Board meeting. A policy was adopted by the board that the minutes be streamlined and reflect only the policy and information discussed.

### **Officer Reports**

**First VP** — Lee Hahn reported that he and Jeff Miller, Executive Director, were working on financial reports to send out to the board. The discussion included what ought to be included in the reports and the frequency of dissemination. The reports will include the Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Statement with year to year comparisons and a membership report. The financial report may also include other financial information as deemed important. A suggestion was made that these reports should be produced quarterly and the board agreed with the suggestion.

**Second VP** — John Boyd stated that he needed to begin acquire pledges for auction plants for the annual meeting and asked the board for assistance.

**Treasurer** — In the absence of Bennett Saunders, the treasurer's report was given

by Jeff Miller. The financial reports for the American Boxwood Society were reviewed and found to be in order. Jeff Miller stated that the membership renewals were coming in, but at a slow pace. It was decided by the board that a renewal letter would be sent out to those that have not renewed their membership by August 1, 2010. A motion was made and passed to allocate funds to send out a mailing to reach new potential members in Oregon. A suggestion was made that a thank you letter should be sent out to every new member; this suggestion carried the support of the board.

### **Committee Reports**

**Bulletin and Publications** — The July issue of the *Boxwood Bulletin* is currently at the printer. A discussion was held regarding the quantity of books currently held in stock and when the supply will need to be republished. This will be revisited at a future board meeting and it was determined that action must be taken to reprint the *Handbook* in one year and the *Encyclopedia* within two years.

A discussion was held that a new editor be found immediately to take over the publication of the *Boxwood Bulletin*. Ideas and suggestions were shared. A formal search will begin immediately for a replacement and this will be discussed at the annual meeting in October.

**Registrar** — The registrar has accepted for registration, *Buxus sempervirens* 'Russian'.

**Memorial Garden** - Walter Carell reported that the spring cleanup was a success and greatly enhanced the appearance of the Memorial Garden. A fall cleanup will be scheduled in the near future. Walter Carell reported on his discussion with the Director of Blandy, and staff, about the expansion of the Memorial Garden

and relocation of boxwood.

**Annual Meeting** — A report was presented on the annual meeting at Dawes and preparation for the 50th Anniversary of the ABS in 2011.

### **New Business**

- Liability insurance has been issued to the ABS.

- Website renovation and additional information and pictures of boxwood were discussed. Action to be taken at the next board meeting.

- A motion was made and passed to participate in the 2011 MANTS show

- A discussion ensued and consent given to have a strategic planning session for the ABS this fall. This initiative will be conducted by Lee Hahn.

A replacement for the position of Secretary was discussed

Adjournment - A motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting was adopted unanimously.

## **Future Annual ABS Meetings**

- ❖ Spring 2011  
Boyce, VA  
ABS 50th Anniversary
- ❖ Spring 2012  
Charleston, SC
- ❖ Spring 2013  
Williamsburg, VA

# THE BOXWOOD BOOKSHELF

*Om Een Struik Die Palm Werd* was written by Dr. August Johan Bernet Kempers and published in 1966. The title translates to, "To a Palm Tree That Was"

or, "About a Simple Bush." It was published by Rijksmuseum Voor Volkskunde in Arnhem, Gelderland, Netherlands. This 6¾" by 9½" soft cover book, written in Dutch, has 180 pages, 93 black and white photographs and illustrations. It includes an extensive bibliography with 519 citations.

*Om Een Struik Die Palm Werd* has a nine page summary in English. This was reprinted, in its entirety, in three parts in *The Boxwood Bulletin* (Vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 2–9; vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 18–25; and vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 37–40). This summary, located in the back of the book, and the numerous photographs throughout, are the most useful features for those who are only able to read English. This limitation ought not deter anyone from experiencing this very warm book filled with a unique and comprehensive boxwood story surrounded by history, religion, culture, and lore!

Dr. A.J. Bernet Kempers was a Dutch Archaeologist who, for his entire professional career, investigated ancient Indonesian civilizations, culture, and artifacts. He was a productive and energetic writer of original studies resulting in several books which include: *The Art of Ancient Indonesia*, *Introduction to Balinese Archeology & Guide to the Monuments*, *Ancient Indonesian Art*, *The Kettledrums of Southeast Asia*, and *APA Pocket Guide Bali*; as well as dozens of scholarly articles which appeared in a variety of professional journals.

It is with this same academic and professional expertise which Dr. Bernet Kempers researched and wrote, *Om Een Struik Die Palm Werd*. The resulting book, written nearly 45 years ago, is still the most comprehensive resource on the historical significance and the religious uses

A. J. BERNET KEMPERS



OM EEN STRUIK  
DIE PALM WERD



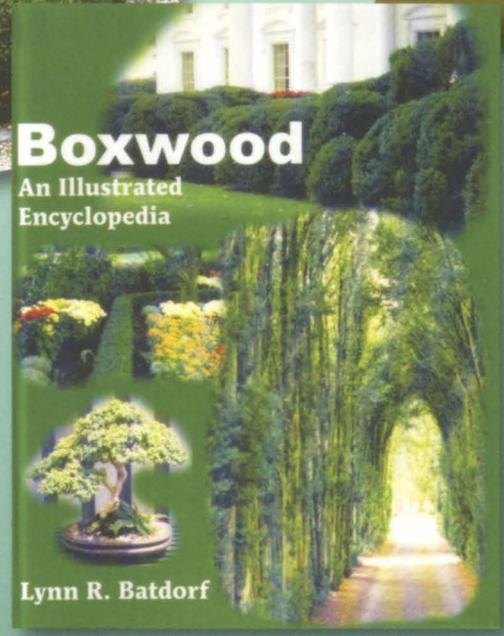
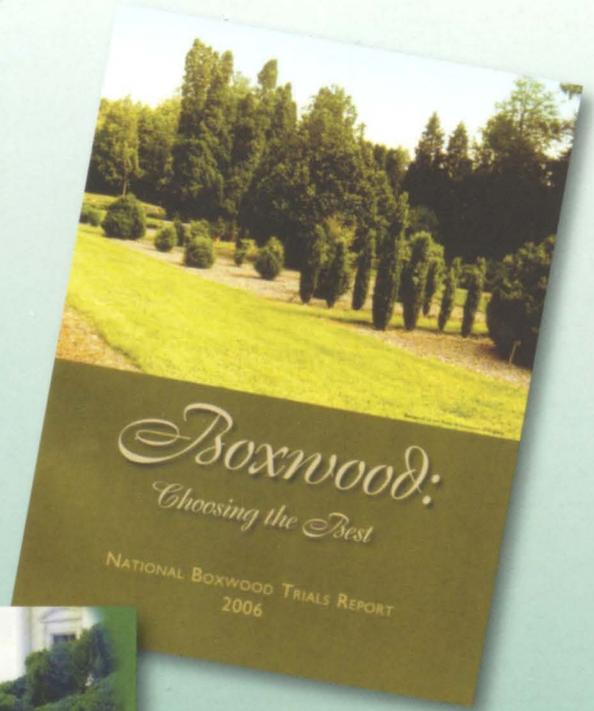
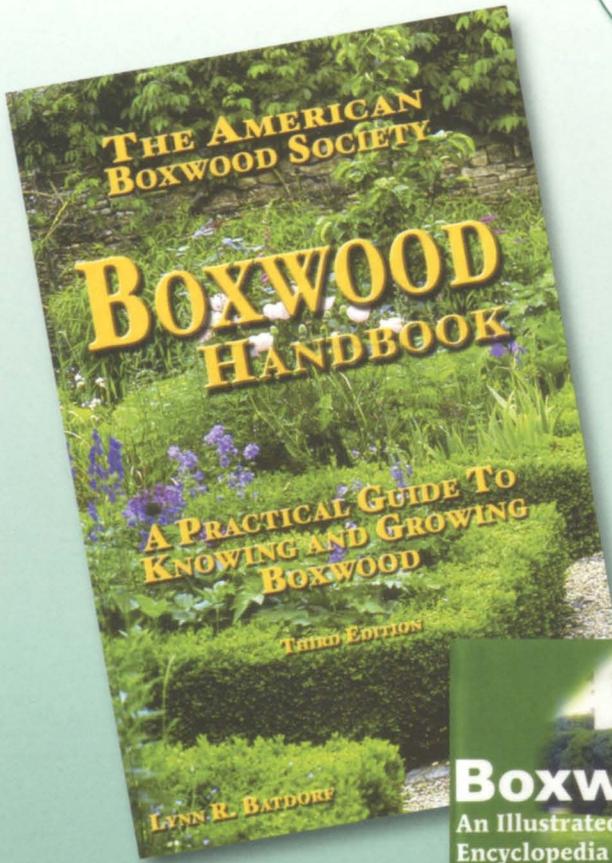
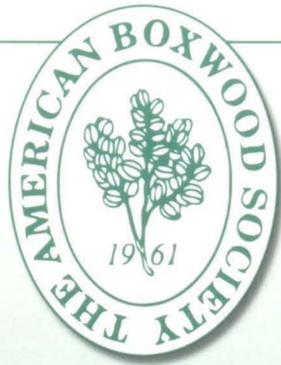
of boxwood. Time has only enhanced the useful, interesting, and most of all, valuable and scholarly information that seems to burst out from within every page of this book.

The book begins with a botanical survey of the history and distribution of *Buxus*. It progresses through the early garden uses of box through Europe and North America. Then the origins of using box as a Christmas tree by the Germans and woodcarving in the ancient and contemporary near east are well examined. Next, the largest section of the book examines the "green bough" in great detail. The numerous and interesting explanations and examples of box leaves and box wood used in religious and social occasions provides hours of reading pleasure.

I obtained my copy of *Om Een Struik Die Palm Werd* 14 years ago while visiting Boskoop, Netherlands. Through the years, I have read this book three times. Seriously. With each reading, I have been delighted by discovering more fascinating details which I had previously overlooked.

Even 45 years after its publication, *Om Een Struik Die Palm Werd*, is still easily available from a variety of book dealers located primarily in the Netherlands. The dealers are quickly identified in a general internet search. Expect to pay a modest 20 to 35 euros for a book in unused, or very lightly used, condition with international postage included.

Lynn R. Batdorf



*Order Now! Essential Boxwood Reading – See Details on Page 18.*

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