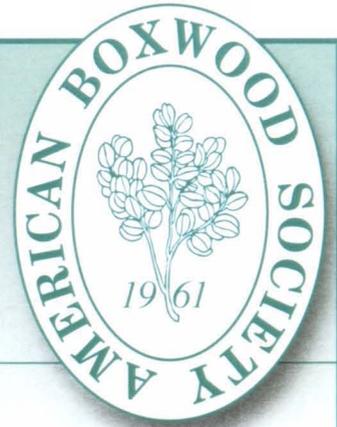


# THE BOXWOOD BULLETIN

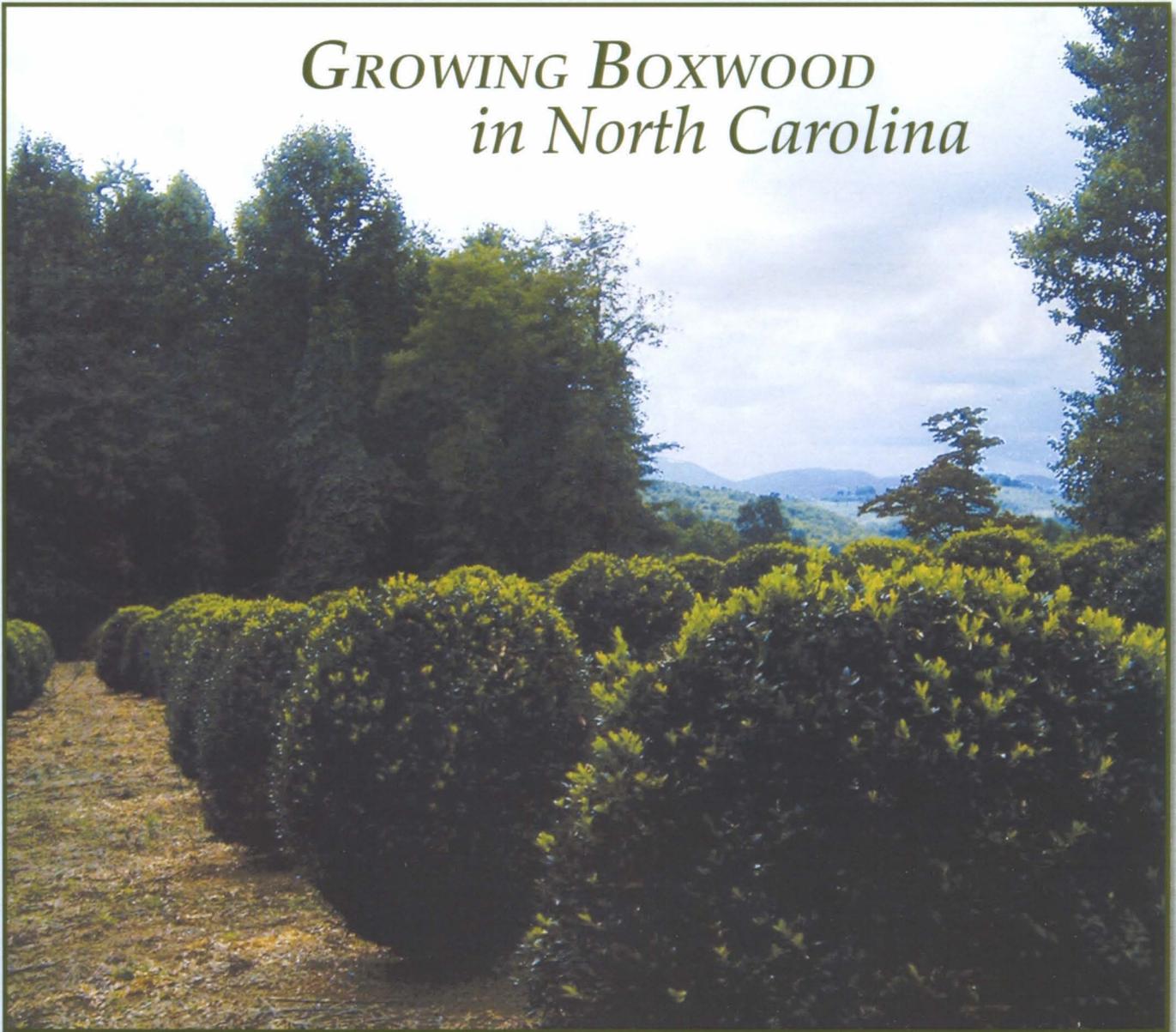


The journal of the American Boxwood Society  
devoted to our oldest garden ornamental

Vol. 52 No. 2

Fall 2012

## *GROWING BOXWOOD in North Carolina*



B. Edwards

# 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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**American Boxwood Society**

P.O. Box 85

Boyce, VA 22620-0085

Editor, *The Boxwood Bulletin* Louise T. Smith

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## Notes From the Editor...

It was a long, hot, weird summer, to put it mildly, with the dry West ravaged by fires, the Midwest by drought, the East and Southeast by powerful storms bringing wind and 20" downpours. Hurricane Isaac drenched New Orleans and the Midwest received heavy rains, good news for those parched states. Few, if any, have escaped excesses of some sort—and we're ready for Fall.

With the arrival of the autumnal equinox, a few hours away as I write, gardeners and growers across the country will be surveying the work of Mother Nature, and assessing their successes, losses, and narrow escapes. Our beloved ornamental, *Buxus*, is proving its resilience and self-sufficiency. I, for one, am completely amazed at the patience and endurance shown by my beautiful *Buxus*, which has coped successfully, it seems, with the extremely high temperatures in Indiana. We hope this agility will prove to be life-saving in the aftermath of the difficulties of the summer of 2012.

There are areas that seem miraculously to avoid the harsh extremes of weather and in many ways take on aspects of Eden! In this issue we explore a region that might qualify—where there is adequate to ample rainfall and moderate temperatures, summer and winter—North Carolina, where growers and gardeners toil in one of the most beautiful settings in this country. For centuries, residents and visitors alike have been captivated by the beauty and bounty of the area. John Bartram, our country's first serious botanist and plant hunter, was awe struck by his experiences in the Appalachians and the incredible variety of the Blue Ridge and the Piedmont. (See *The Boxwood Bookshelf* in this issue.) Our look at North Carolina concludes with a visit to the Edwards Family Farms, where all family members turn to as Thanksgiving approaches, and working with their beautiful home grown boxwood and evergreen trees, produce stunning wreaths and other seasonal beauties! You too can have a bit of Eden! Read on for a delightful surprise!



## THE ABS IN ACTION... And Other News of the Society

- The Governing Board of the ABS will be holding its fall meeting at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington DC, in October. A tour of the National Boxwood Collection will be a part of the agenda.
- Coordinator Katherine Ward and her committee are in the process of making final decisions on program and speakers for the 2013 Annual Meeting and Symposium, and welcome suggestions from ABS members across the country. This is your chance to shape program with your preferences. Contact the ABS office with your ideas for presenters. Donations to the auction and raffle also are requested, and can include items like books, gardening tools, tabletop topiary, etc., in addition to boxwood and other plants.

### THE ABS SYMPOSIUM—WILLIAMSBURG—MAY 19-21, 2013

*Erratum:* Apologies to Kelly Megeath for the misspelling of her name in the Summer issue, page 11.

# THE U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM AND ITS NATIONAL BOXWOOD COLLECTION

*The ABS Governing Board is having its Fall meeting at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington D.C. in October, this meeting coinciding with the publication of the ABS Fall Bulletin. It seems a good time to remind the membership of the work of the Arboretum and provide an update on its National Boxwood Collection.*

**A**n arboretum is an important part of the system of institutions that displays, nurtures and studies the trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants of an area or country. Arboreta, public and private, play a vital role in the understanding and preservation of plants, primarily trees and the smaller woody plants that form forests and understories, and dot landscapes all over the world.

The contribution of these plants to the well-being of man is inestimable. It is obligatory that we study them, understand them, nurture them, and protect, preserve and propagate them. But it is the tendency of most of us to take for granted these marvels of nature and the vital role they play in our lives. They offer health, refreshment and serenity quietly and their gifts often go unnoticed. It falls to the arboreta of our nation and their allied organizations to promote the appreciation and preservation of our precious trees and other woody plants, like boxwood, and the U.S. National Arboretum (USNA) is one such sanctuary. It is well known among plant societies and plant professionals from scientists to landscape architects across the country, but is perhaps not so well known among the general population, a deficiency that should be remedied.

*Their stated mission is to serve the public need for scientific research and education regarding the plants that are a crucial element in our environment, and that mission has never been more important.*

The U.S. National Arboretum was established in 1927 by an Act of Congress, and is under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service. Their stated mission is to serve the public need for scientific research and education regarding the plants that are a crucial element in our environment, and that mission has never been more important. Located in northeast Washington, DC on 446 acres, the USNA has additional research locations in Beltsville, Maryland and McMinnville, Tennessee.

Being a part of a federal agency, the Arboretum is federally funded, but also has the support of a number of organizations that are private, and it is assisted by a corps of volunteers who work in all its areas. There are interns, too, who work in research, horticulture, education, facilities management and public garden administration. These are supported by non-profit organizations and privately donated funds. It was through the efforts of one such organization, the Friends of the Arboretum, that the National Boxwood Collection received its first intern.

In 1962, the Director of the Arboretum, Dr. Henry Skinner, established the Boxwood Collection, and began the slow, painstaking journey to the proud collection it is today. The curator of the Boxwood Collection at the Arboretum is Lynn Batdorf, who serves as registrar for the American Boxwood Society which is the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Buxus*. As curator of the collection, Lynn sees to the health and care of the collection, insuring at all times a pleasing and useful presentation of the collection. He sees to the acquisition of candidates for the collection, and in general, is protector of the collection and the quality and integrity of it. Documentation and authentication of the various boxwood cultivars is another critical task he performs to maintain this world class collection of boxwood. It is his work with the National Boxwood Collection which has equipped Lynn to write three authoritative books on boxwood.



L. Batdorf

In 1994, the National Boxwood Collection was selected as one of six for the pilot project of what became the North America Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC)—a prestigious recognition of the Collection’s well-deserved reputation for excellence. The NAPCC is a network of botanical gardens and arboreta working to coordinate a continent-wide approach to germplasm preservation and to promote high standards of plant collection management. Collection holders make germplasm available for taxonomic studies, evaluation, breeding, and other research. The collections may serve as reference collections for plant identification and cultivar registration. Participants are able to compare holdings with others to identify duplications or gaps. These efficient uses of resources through collaborative activities strengthen holdings and make the work of curators easier and less isolated. The NAPCC is sponsored by the American Public Garden Association, a premier association for public gardens in North America. This association has over 500 institutional members which draw about 70 million visitors annually.

There are eight major collections within the Arboretum, boxwood being one of them. In each instance, there is the basic need for good maintenance, which involves a great deal more than making the area look neat and tidy. Ongoing maintenance necessarily incorporates ongoing research into the

responses of a plant to the environmental conditions at any given time. It requires the thoughtful management and observation of every aspect of a plant and record keeping is vital.

In every collection, the curator is always looking at the need and opportunity for development—in two senses: making additions to the inventory of the collection when there is the opportunity to do so; and developing the use of the collection. Being useful means being a tool for research and it is in that role that the collections are most important. Certainly this has been found to be true in the National Boxwood Collection where there is ongoing research into boxwood disease which has become more intense with the appearance of *Cylindrocladium* (boxwood blight) in the US. Having a diverse collection of boxwood already in place—because the collection has been carefully developed—has given

*...the excellent representation of genetic diversity in the collection is a major strength of the holdings.*

the Arboretum a big head start in doing this research. Indeed, the excellent representation of genetic diversity in the collection is a major strength of the holdings. The collection is regarded as outstanding in terms of germplasm and genetic diversity gathered there, and the scientific importance of this cannot be overestimated.

Continuing expansion—both in terms of space and additions to collections is high priority. The research that results from an expanding collection is obviously expanding also. An area has become available which may be used for a grouping of small boxwood and dwarf cultivars. The small boxwood tend to become lost when placed within the areas planted with large-growing box. Giving the small box an area of its own will provide lots of opportunity for evaluation as well as being attractive and especially interesting to owners of small gardens. Being attractive and inviting, and easily navigated are important aspects of a collection, and the ability to draw people in and capture their interest are characteristics always being sought by the caretakers. There are 175 different living taxa in the Boxwood Collection, and the collection is completely labeled. It is the most complete and best documented collection of *Buxus* in cultivation.\*

The American Boxwood Society has a history of lending its support to the USNA through its support of the National Boxwood Collection. In 2010-11 when private support of the Arboretum was to be slashed, it was the Boxwood Collection (and azalea hillside) which were proposed for removal. The leadership of the ABS waged a vigorous campaign to stop the move. Congressmen received a barrage of strongly opinionated letters and phone calls; even the European Boxwood and Topiary Society stepped into the fray, underscoring the value and importance of the collection in research. The crisis was averted, but with continuing budget problems in Washington, the USNA is hoping to develop new ways to augment government funding. Working hard with stakeholders and friends, the Arboretum will be making every effort to pursue its tradition of excellence.

\*It should be noted that the herbarium at the Arboretum (preserved specimens) has about 500 filed *Buxus* specimens, another important aid to research.

Note: The editor would like to express appreciation to Dr. Hefferan, Director; Scott Aker, Garden Units Leader; Lynn Batdorf, Curator, and all the staff of the U.S. National Arboretum for their good work. Special thanks to Scott and Lynn for taking time to assist with this article.

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**A listing of the National Boxwood Collection follows.**

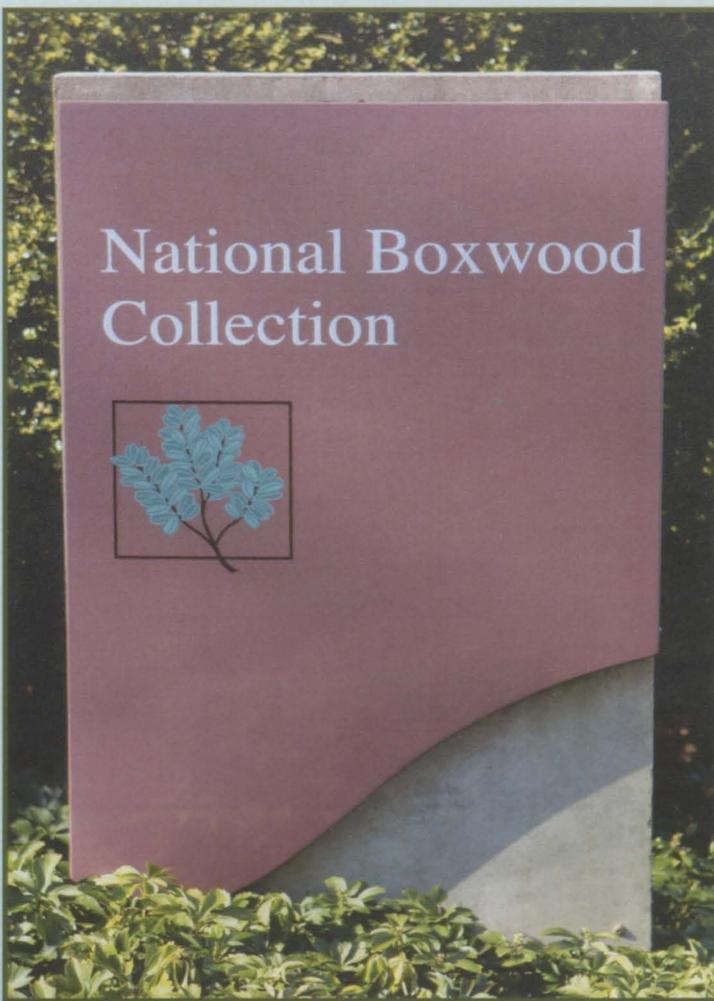


L. Batdorf

# National Boxwood Collection Inventory

There are 175 *Buxus* taxa and 488 total boxwood plants in the collection. While there is a large repository of documentation regarding each of the boxwood in the collection, the following is a simple listing.

The "K" numbers indicate those plants propagated by Henry Hohman (owner of the Kingsville Nursery of Kingsville, MD) from cuttings taken by Dr. Edgar Anderson on his plant-hunting expedition to the Balkans in 1935. To properly identify the cuttings Hohman listed them in numeric order and added the "K" to designate Kingsville Nursery. Some "K" plants have gone on to receive cultivar names.



<i>Buxus balearica</i>	<i>Buxus</i> (K-081)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Grace
<i>Buxus bodinieri</i>	<i>Buxus</i> (K-089)	Hendrick Phillips'
<i>Buxus harlandii</i>	<i>Buxus</i> (K-091)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Green Pillow'
<i>Buxus harlandii</i> 'Richard'	<i>Buxus</i> (K-094)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Helen Whiting'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-002)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-099)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Henry Hohman'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-016)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-100)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var. <i>japonica</i>
<i>Buxus</i> (K-019)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-106)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var.
<i>Buxus</i> (K-022)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-107)	<i>japonica</i> 'Jim Stauffer'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-023)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-112)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var. <i>japonica</i>
<i>Buxus</i> (K-024)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-114)	'Morris Dwarf'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-028)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-118)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var. <i>japonica</i>
<i>Buxus</i> (K-032)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-119)	'Morris Midget'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-036)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-130)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var.
<i>Buxus</i> (K-037)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-133)	<i>japonica</i> 'National'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-040)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-134)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> var.
<i>Buxus</i> (K-042)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-140)	<i>japonica</i> 'Winter Gem'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-046)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-144)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> (Kingsville)
<i>Buxus</i> (K-047)	<i>Buxus</i> (K-146)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> (Kingsville 4A)
<i>Buxus</i> (K-052)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Apply Green'	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> (Kingsville L)
<i>Buxus</i> (K-065)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Compacta'	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Miss Jones'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-070)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Curly Locks'	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Northern Emerald'
<i>Buxus</i> (K-074)	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'File Leaf'	<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Peergold'

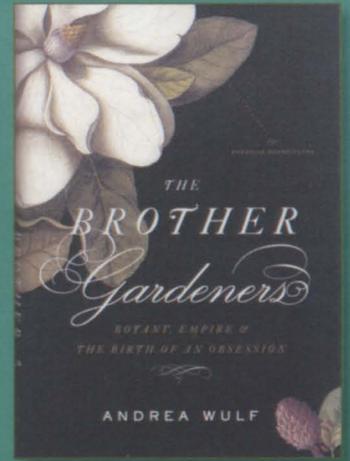
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Quiet End'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> (seedling selection)	'Heinrich Bruns'	'Rosmarinifolia'
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Sunnyside'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Henry Shaw'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Rotundifolia'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Hermann	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Salicifolia'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Abilene'	von Shrenk'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Agram'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Hood'	'Salicifolia Elata'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Alyce'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Inglis'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Scupi'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Anderson'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ipek'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> (seedling)
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Angustifolia'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Jensen'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ste.
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Arborescens'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Joe Gable'	Genevieve'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Joy'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Strassner'
'Arborescens Decussata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Suffruticosa'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Krossi-livonia'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Treska Gorge'
( 'Arborescens' seedling)	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Latifolia	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Undulifolia'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Arctic Emerald'	Macrophylla'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Vardar Valley'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Varifolia'
'Argenteo-variegata'	'Latifolia Maculata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Aristocrat'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Washington Missouri'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Latifolia Marginata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Welleri'
'Aureo-variegata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Belleville'	'Latifolia Nova'	'West Ridgeway'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Berlin'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Latifolia	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Woodland'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Blauer Heinz'	Rotundifolia'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Zehring'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Bullata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Liberty'	<i>Buxus sinica</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Butterworth'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Carrs'	'Macrophylla'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Cliffside'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Marginata'	'Franklin's Gem'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Decussata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Dee Runk'	'Mary Gamble'	'Justin Brouwers'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Denmark'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Memorial'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ed Wycoff'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Pincushion'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Myosotidifolia'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
'Edgar Anderson'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	(seedling selection)
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Nana Compacta'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
'Elegantissima'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Natchez'	'Sunburst'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
'Emerald Green'	'Newport Blue'	'Tall Boy'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Fastigiata'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Nish'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Winter Beauty'
(fastigate form)	'Northern Find'	<i>Buxus sinica</i> var. <i>insularis</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Fortunei	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	'Wintergreen'
Rotundifolia'	'Northern New York'	<i>Buxus wallichiana</i>
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Glauca'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Northland'	<i>Buxus</i> (Colprit #3)
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Notata'	<i>Buxus</i> (Colprit #4)
'Graham Blandy'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ohio'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Glencoe'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Pendula'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Green Gem'
'Handsworthiensis'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ponteyi'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Green Ice'
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Prostrata'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Green Mound'
'Hardwickensis'	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Pyramidalis'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Green Mountain'
	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Ransom'	<i>Buxus</i> 'Green Velvet'

# The Boxwood Bookshelf

## *The Brother Gardeners Botany, Empire & the Birth of an Obsession*

By Andrea Wulf

Knopf, 2009 New York ISBN 978-0-307-27023-8



**T**he *Brother Gardeners* is a fascinating account of a garden revolution that began in America in the eighteenth century and of the plant trade that gave rise to that revolution. The trade between America and various countries, though mainly England, is related through letters of those involved, beginning in 1733 when the American farmer John Bartram dispatched two boxes of plants and seeds from the American colonies to London merchant Peter Collinson, thus beginning what was to become a deep friendship. During the next half-century, Collinson and a few other botany enthusiasts received and grew hundreds of American species. Most of these had never been grown in British soil, but in time the trees, evergreens, and shrubs from America would forever transform the English garden.

*The Brother Gardeners* follows the lives of six of these men whose letters concerning their plant transactions have given us a fascinating look at the development of the plant trade at that time and the excitement that accompanied the participation in it. (An interesting aside is the fact that a second copy of most of these letters was made and kept in the file of the sender, as a reminder of what had been written, virtually assuring the preservation of these valuable records of the plant trade and its ramifications.) In addition to Bartram and Collinson, we meet Philip Miller, who wrote the *Gardener's Dictionary* and was curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, a huge player in the hunt for new botanical information; Carl Linnaeus, whose system of plant nomenclature helped bring botany to the middle classes; and Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, plant hunters who sailed with Captain Cook on the *Endeavour*.

The letters, along with the plant information, also revealed much of the everyday life of the people involved. Bartram, we learn, was an adventurer and a man of great fortitude, who became totally engrossed in his discoveries of the plants of the new world, while his wife ran the farm, and raised their many children. Going into wilderness alone to collect the species that the Europeans coveted (but were frequently unwilling to pay for) was often dangerous. Bartram traveled on horseback as far as the southern Appalachians, where the sights and the botanical treasures—and the risks—were almost overwhelming.

We witness the considerable influence and diligence of Linnaeus and also learn of the parts played by Captain Cook and Captain Bligh—the reader will be surprised! Both were men of exceptional ability and daring.

This is an engrossing book, providing great detail, all documented with notes at the back of the book. There is a wonderful glossary of plants which includes the plants' dates of introduction into England and information about those introductions. There is also an engrossing bibliography. Wulf writes with great flow that gives life to what she is describing, a characteristic that she brings to all her books. I regretted running out of pages to read!

By Tish Iorio  
Adapted for *The Bulletin*

**(Tish reviewed *Founding Gardeners*, another Wulf book, in the Summer Bulletin.)**

# Growing Boxwood in North Carolina

*"Nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina..."*

For gardeners and plantsmen, Gus Kahn's lyrics say it all. It's no secret that as a place for nurturing plants, North Carolina has few peers. Bartram, the 18<sup>th</sup> C. plant hunter and botanist, called it a "terrestrial paradise". Elizabeth Lawrence could not resist writing about the joys of gardening in North Carolina, where her garden in Charlotte, started from scratch, flourished and became a virtual laboratory documenting the life-giving environment of her beloved state. The state has long been the place of choice for retirees looking to plant their dream garden; vegetable farmers, in plots small and huge, tend crops that seem to spring effortlessly from the soil; evergreen farmers and boxwood growers extol the virtues of their plants and the soil that produces them. North Carolina! Its agricultural and botanical history is legend!

Today, farmers in North Carolina are still plying their craft with a wide variety of crops, and praise for farming there is still as exuberant as ever! It didn't take long for nurserymen to cast their eyes on the North Carolina soil and at this point there are hundreds of nurseries flourishing across the state. When asked about the factors that contribute most to a grower's paradise, the first answer is always "soil". References to soil abound and with good reason. Researching the soil of North Carolina reveals that it is something of a wonder. For generations, centuries, it has been producing all kinds of plants, from dense forests to shrubs, to tobacco, to tomatoes, and everything in between! It remains rich and loamy with the right amount of clay and bits of rock and mica tossed in. The soil of the Piedmont plateau in western North Carolina, a boxwood growing area, is particularly fine. The gentle rains that are frequent on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains slowly move the soil on the mountains down to the lower elevations—a process that has been in effect for thousands of years—constantly enriching the soil of the fields.

Originally mapped in Cecil County, Maryland, in 1899, more than 10 million acres of the Cecil soil series are now mapped in the Piedmont region of the southeastern United States. It extends from Virginia through North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Virgin Cecil soils support forests dominated by pine, oak and hickory and have a topsoil of brown sandy loam. The subsoil is a red clay and clay loam with sharp quartz sand intermixed which provides the excellent drainage and makes the clay more friable. The Cecil soils are very deep, well-drained, moderately permeable soils. This soil is perhaps the key element in North Carolina's claim to agricultural fame and is certainly a factor in the high quality boxwood that is grown there.

North Carolina has a broad range of climate conditions because of its three distinct regions—the mountains, the Piedmont plateau and the coastal plains. This topographical variety along with the presence of the Gulf Stream off the coast, gives North Carolina the largest climate variability of any state east of the Mississippi. Plants that are grown here develop adaptability because they experience wide temperature variations. The boxwood has benefited tremendously from experiencing the wide temperature range and as a result adapts well to both southern and northern locations, an important factor for the growers who can market their plants in widely diverse locations in the US.

The growing season on the Piedmont plateau brings nights that are very cool, days that warm up to the 80's, ample rain on the eastern slope, protection from the western winds (particularly helpful in winter)—it is an ideal situation. And it is a long growing season that the plants enjoy, allowing them to achieve maximum potential within the year. This maximum growth opportunity is a huge boon to the grower who can get his plants to market sooner.



B. Edwards



B. Edwards

Several growers were interviewed for this article, and all were enthusiastic in their praise of North Carolina's fine growing conditions. Kenneth Lowe of L&H Enterprises spoke of the loamy soil, productive and easy to work with. "It was recognized early—before 1900—that this part of the state was good for growing boxwood, and it still is." He pointed out that in the beginning the fields of boxwood and evergreen trees were planted primarily for the seasonal floral business; hundreds of thousands of pounds of cuttings were harvested and shipped. "The boxwood has been here for a long time; when we first started here, we were thinning 10' boxwood for cuttings!"

Then came the decision to focus on boxwood for the landscaping industry. Clearly, the area climate and soil produced great plants and it was easy to see that those plants would be a great asset to landscaping businesses. "...and so, about fifteen years ago we turned our attention to establishing nurseries for that purpose."

"The self-sufficiency of the boxwood plant was a big part of deciding to grow for landscapes. We do spray for insects in the late spring and carry out a routine fertilizing program, but basically boxwood requires minimal attention.

"Drought does not often occur here; but boxwood is a fairly drought resistant plant anyway, which is a big help, for us and for the property owner who uses box in the landscape." More than 11 inches of rain fell on the Piedmont plateau in July, 2012, and though that is more than usual, there is a history of consistently abundant rainfall and it is a big factor in the successful farming there.

Mr. Lowe uses primarily American and Korean boxwood, as well as 'Green Velvet' and 'Green Mountain' in the nursery fields, and likes 'Justin Brouwers' too. Mostly, there is the American, *Buxus sempervirens*, for best all around performance and greatest demand.

The floral seasonal greenery industry still benefits from the fields of L&H Enterprises. Boxwood cuttings are still produced for seasonal greenery needs of the florist, making use of the fall plant trimming and shaping.

In the early 90's, Danny Dollar (Blue Ridge Boxwood) also shifted his focus to landscape plants from seasonal support for the floral industry. In an interview for the Bulletin, he pointed out that "boxwood plants are at their best in areas like we have here at the base of the mountains. The mix of daytime heat, cool nights and rain in the prime growing season make the North Carolina mountain area perfect for boxwood.

"The growing period here is 4-6 weeks longer at 1500-1800 feet above sea level than at higher elevations. The climate is similar to the climate of the northeast, where boxwood is used extensively. A big selling point of North Carolina boxwood is that it is accustomed to the temperature extremes found here in our mountain area. Our plants have the ability to withstand fluctuations in temperatures in their final destinations because they are grown in an area having a wide range of temperatures—a well known fact. Boxwood grown in a climate with minimal temperature variation face a greater challenge and possible "shock" when transplanted outside their accustomed range."

Mr. Dollar finds the consistency of his boxwood an important selling point—good color, density and healthy rootballs. He gives credit to the superb natural setting of his fields, but acknowledges the importance of good management in this area where growth is rapid. The “thinning process” is necessary (and labor intensive) and soil analysis is always being checked to stay on top of necessary soil amendment. Proper planting techniques are crucial in the fields as in the home situation—never too deep, and in holes large enough for the root system.

Newly planted boxwood need careful supervision of water requirements; established plants need protection from overwatering, meaning good drainage is imperative from the outset. Vigilance and diligence in accomplishing these tasks are paramount, whether growing on a large scale or in the home setting, Mr. Dollar pointed out, and he stressed the importance of getting this message out to the public who ultimately own his plants.

Blue Ridge Boxwood includes in its fields, American, English, ‘Wintergreen’, ‘Green Mountain’, ‘Green Velvet’ and ‘Vardar Valley’. Mr. Dollar has a particular fondness for the American, referring to its “stately appearance” as well as its excellent color. He

gives ‘Wintergreen’ excellent marks too, for its ability to withstand wide temperature fluctuations.

This article would be incomplete without checking in on ABS member Hugh Crump, a native North Carolinian, superb plantsman and well-known landscape gardener and designer. Hugh’s *buxeti* (boxwood plantations, known locally as “patches”) of his American Boxwood Company are located in the Piedmont plateau also. His respect for the area and its great natural gifts is palpable. “The soil and the climate are the source of the great plants that grow here,” he said, corroborating the statements of other growers. “Our [the growers] first job, is to work responsibly with the environment.” Clearly it’s a great place to grow—plants and businesses.

### A Fascinating Find—The Tradition Lives On

Conversations with the growers often turned to the history of this area of the Piedmont plateau where so much fine boxwood is grown. They referred often to the fact that boxwood has been here for many generations. In the early 1900’s, the Woodruff family made a cottage industry of harvesting and using the greens from box and pine and fir trees (as well as berries and pine cones and other byproducts of the trees and shrubs) for Christmas wreaths. Local families were hired to do the seasonal work, some collecting the cuttings, some picking up the greens at a designated place, taking them home and fashioning them into wreaths and garlands. The finished products were returned to headquarters, loaded into horse drawn wagons (trucks came later) and taken to markets to sell. Woodruff had a head for business and the wisdom of a farmer obviously, knowing that these beautiful handmade Christmas decorations would be welcomed in towns and cities where such greens were more difficult to come by. (His business acumen extended to his management practices whereby he paid the locals who made the wreaths, in script, redeemable at his store where valued staples and Christmas toys could be bought, bringing an increased measure of cheer to the modest homes where, no doubt, beautiful wreaths already hung over the blazing fireplace!) Woodruff descendants carried on the business, adding to the raw materials needed by planting fields of evergreen trees and boxwood.

Today, the area of the Appalachians in western North Carolina around Lowgap still is very much involved in the production of seasonal greenery and décor. A number of families carry on the tradition, some also planting for landscape businesses as well as creating the wreaths and other seasonal pieces.



B. Edwards

The Edwards Family Farms, near Sparta, are growers and purveyors of the best Mother Nature has to offer in North Carolina. They carry on the traditions of the region in the most respected ways. There are boxwood fields and a Christmas tree farm and, as a prelude to Thanksgiving they invite everyone to their busy pumpkin patch! The gardens near the house yield vegetables for hundreds of quarts of canned goods, insuring the family's self-sufficiency through the winter. The farms sit on ground that has been in the family for generations. Billy's father planted American boxwood around his home in the 1940's that are still beautiful specimens and used for wreath cuttings. Their durability and beauty are living proof that this is boxwood country!

Maintaining the quality of their plants is top priority for the Edwards Family operation. Tissue samples are checked frequently to make sure the box and evergreens are receiving the nutrients they need. The fine soil is given full credit for the farms' fine plants and keeps the work of adding nutrients to a minimum.

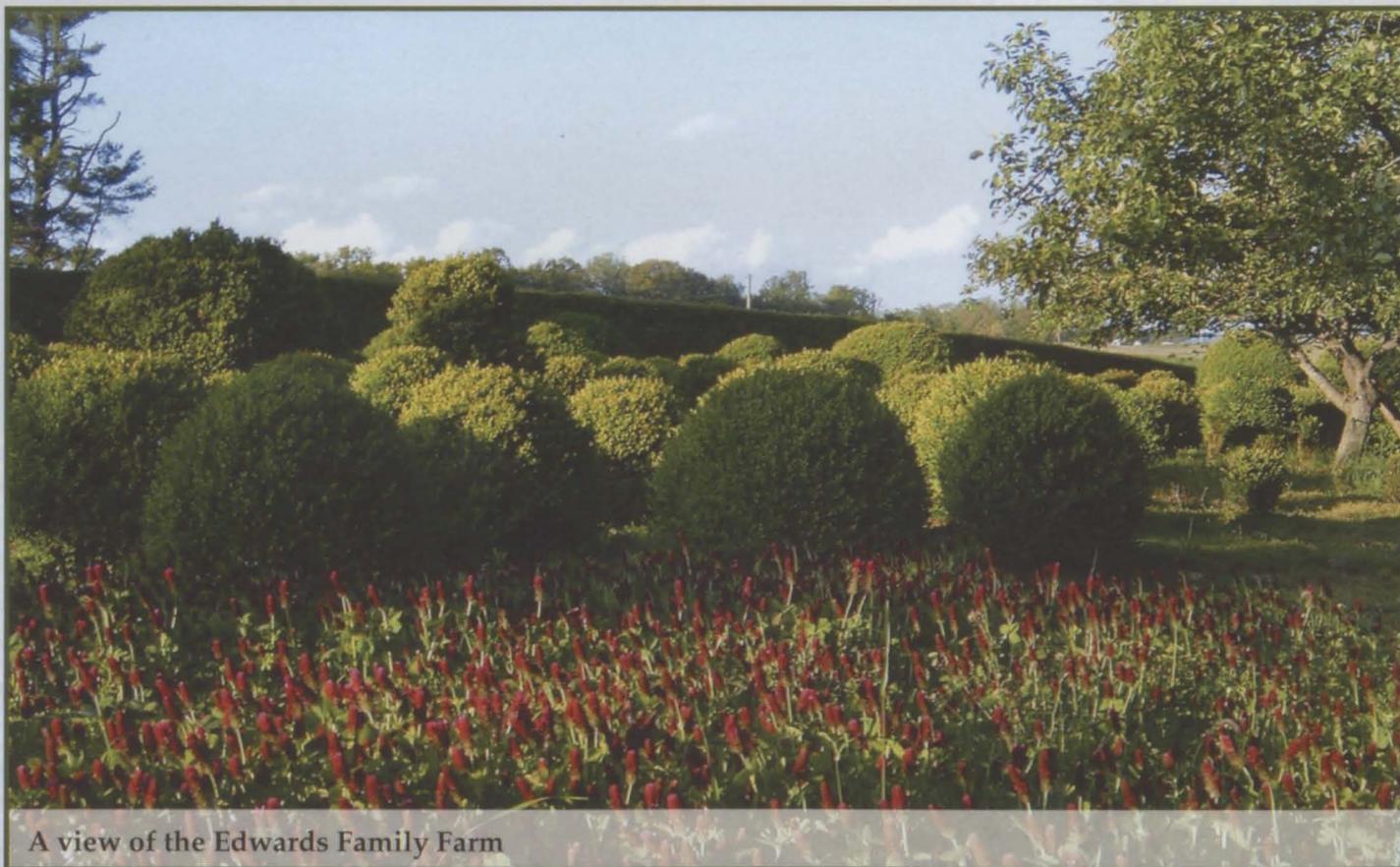
The family-operated enterprise produces not only fine boxwood for the landscape business, but box and evergreens also are grown for the Christmas wreaths—the farms' most famous product! They are produced each year starting at Thanksgiving, insuring the freshest wreaths for Christmas. The fresh cuttings are quickly

made up into full, beautiful works of art by Edwards family members and shipped within hours. Their continuation of the North Carolina tradition of producing beautiful seasonal greens and stunning wreaths is appreciated by people all over the United States. For more information on the Edwards Family wreaths, and how you may obtain one, see their website at [edwardsfamilyfarms.com](http://edwardsfamilyfarms.com).

The abundant gifts of nature that occur in the southern Appalachians, showcased in western North Carolina are frankly spectacular, a feast for the eyes and the soul. It is a marvelous example of man working with nature, using the environment responsibly and contributing positively to its beauty and longevity, using restraint and avoiding excess. This tribute applies too, to those who work tirelessly there with nature's bounty to bring natural wonders and beauty of the seasons into our lives.

*Appreciation is expressed by the editor for the contributions made to this article by the growers and craftsmen of western North Carolina.*

*With this look at regional growing, we envision a series which will examine the cultivation of boxwood across the United States. Watch for future articles, and contact the editor if you would like to contribute to them. Your participation is welcomed.*



A view of the Edwards Family Farm

B. Edwards

## "NOW UP RAISE THE GREENER BOX FOR SHOW!"

—Robert Herrick, 17th c. English poet

*The "fascinating find" in North Carolina inspired visions of rooms filled with "all natural" boxwood creations—wreaths, garlands, and topiary...*



**Y**es, it's time to assess your boxwood bounty in anticipation and celebration of the long holiday season, and to make preparations to delight the senses in the peaceful lull of winter.

Wreaths are a favorite form of home decoration, not just for gardeners, but for anyone who appreciates the beauty of nature and wants to capture that beauty for enjoyment in the home year round. Nothing makes a more beautiful wreath than boxwood and no wreath has captured the imagination like the well known "Williamsburg wreath"—a celebration of the bounty of nature, much favored as a Thanksgiving decoration, but appropriate at any time as an expression of gratitude for Nature's largesse. Boxwood is an important element in this wreath, as in many of the famous

Williamsburg Yuletide confections. (You'll be reminded of this many times on your visit to Williamsburg next spring for the ABS symposium!)

Boxwood gardeners are blessed with an abundance of one of the florist's favorite holiday greens. The sprigs are easy to work with and are long lasting with the simplest of preservation measures, keeping their rich deep green shade for weeks.

Boxwood and other evergreens may be harvested without fear of damaging the plant in mid- to late autumn, unless you have temperatures well below freezing at that time. (Who knows what this year will produce!) In the many places which have moderate temperatures all winter, wreath making can proceed uninterrupted through the holiday season and beyond. The Edwards Family Farms of North Carolina start cutting only at Thanksgiving time to insure the freshest boxwood for their wreaths! (If your boxwood harvest is insufficient for a wreath, you may want to give Billy a call!)

To learn how to condition your boxwood for longer lasting beauty and to make wreaths and other seasonal decorations, consult the books below.



### RECOMMENDED READING

***Colonial Williamsburg Decorates for Christmas***  
by Libby Oliver

This information-packed paperback gives instructions and provides superb drawings of each step in construction. There are beautiful color photos of the finished project.

***Christmas Decorations from Williamsburg***  
by Susan H. Rountree

This hardback book goes into Christmas decorations in great depth and gives suggestions on every aspect of a project. The instructions are clearly written. The color pictures are stunning and guaranteed to provide irresistible inspiration.

Both books are treasure troves of information and well worth their prices.  
Both are published by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

## Reprise...

The falling leaves and temperatures of autumn signal a big change in Mother Nature's *modus operandi*—a slowdown in the world around us which affects human beings as much as the trees, and no doubt is meant to! In the transition that autumn presents we find ourselves, mentally and physically, preparing for a retreat when we may enjoy the quiet pursuits of winter.

This Fall issue of the Bulletin takes us up to the winter hiatus of its publication, a time when we may rest, lay plans and dream of their fruition. Hiatus, a form of a Latin verb meaning "to yawn", indicates a time of relaxed contemplation, a break in regular activities. Perfect! We're ready for a big winter yawn!

As you contemplate your plans for the new year, consider a contribution of time and talent to our Boxwood Society, perhaps service on the Governing Board where your unique gifts can keep things from growing stale! Perhaps you would enjoy a stint as editor of the Bulletin or as a contributor to an issue or two. All these jobs are deeply rewarding and will add new dimensions to your life as well as that of the Society. Remember to include the Annual Meeting and Symposium in your plans, May 19-21, 2013, in Williamsburg. This meeting is for you, the members—your participation is vitally important. Watch for the president's winter letter, providing all the details.

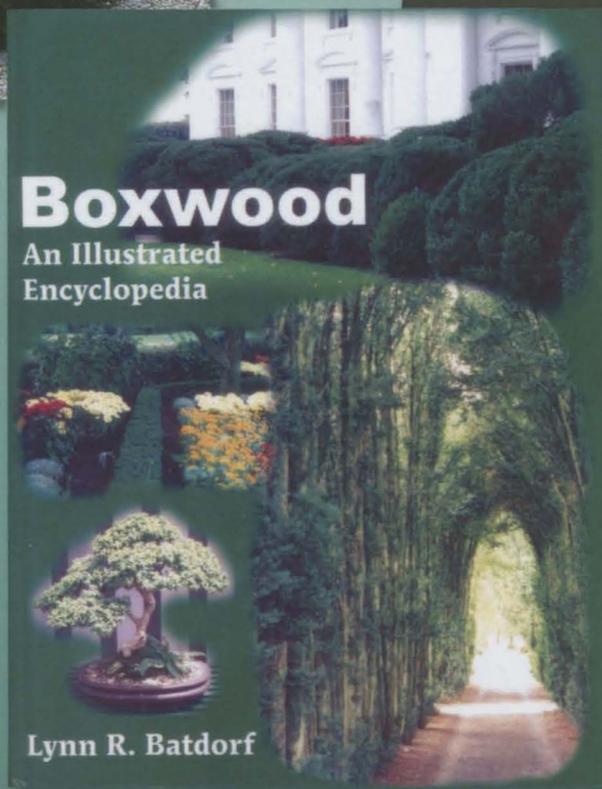
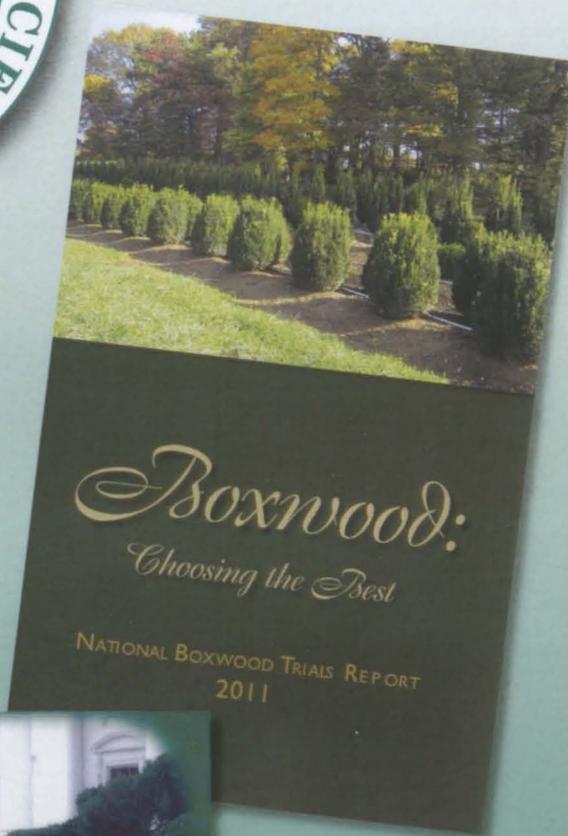
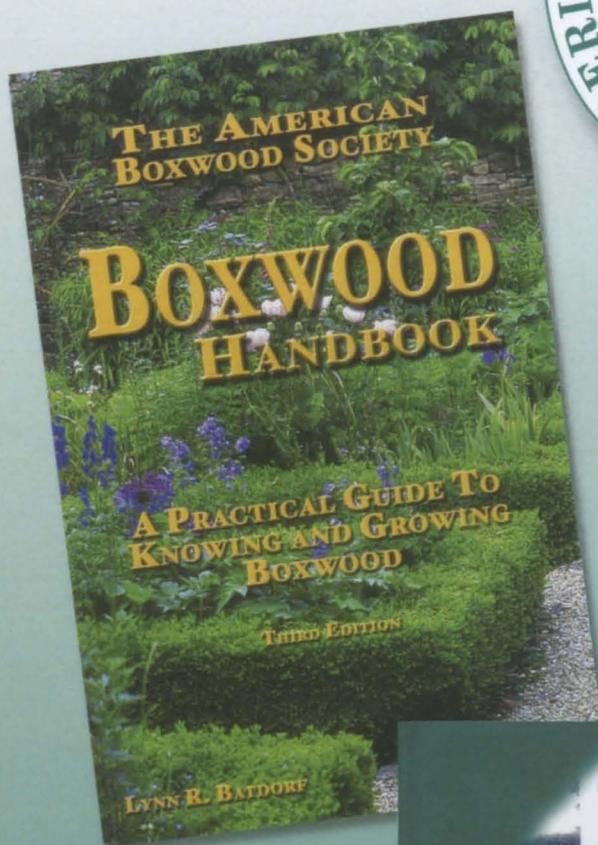
We hope you will benefit from the lull of winter with minds and spirits being rested and refreshed and preparations made for a new year in nature. The Spring Bulletin will arrive with the daffodils and the vernal equinox!



Thanks to the staff at Montpelier for this golden (and russet, and green and brown!) opportunity to view once again Madison's estate and old growth forest, this time in all its autumn glory. (See the Summer issue cover for its verdant Summer dress.) Nature's endless beauty and variety could not be better expressed. YOU can express your appreciation of Mr. Madison's thoughtful preservation work and his incomparable crafting of our great Constitution, and of this great country—

*Vote!*

*November 6*



*Order Now! Essential Boxwood Reading!*  
[www.boxwoodsociety.org](http://www.boxwoodsociety.org)