

# THE BOXWOOD BULLETIN



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

Vol. 53 No. 1

Summer 2013



*courtesy of Longwood Gardens*

Boxwood as the central motif of the historic Main Fountain Garden at Longwood Gardens, circa 1930s

# 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:

**www.boxwoodsociety.org**

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<i>Boxwood Handbook</i> (3rd Edition)	\$ 35	\$ 27
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Back Issues of <i>The Boxwood Bulletin</i> (each)		\$ 10
<i>The Boxwood Bulletin Index 1961-1986</i>		\$ 10
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Editor, *The Boxwood Bulletin* Louise T. Smith

## IN THIS ISSUE

<i>From the Editor</i> . . . . .	3
<i>ABS in Action</i> . . . . .	3
<i>Annual Meeting</i> . . . . .	3
<i>Board Member Biographies</i> . . . . .	5
<i>Lynn Batdorf Retires</i> . . . . .	5
<i>'National Tower'</i> . . . . .	6
<i>Annual Meeting 2013 Minutes</i> . . . . .	7
<i>Box Blight Research</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Boxwood at Longwood Gardens</i> . . . . .	10
<i>The Bulletin Bookshelf</i> . . . . .	15

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The Boxwood Bulletin (ISSN 0006 8535) is published 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



## Notes From the Editor...

The horticultural and botanical riches of Pennsylvania are legendary, beginning with its founder, the quietly capable Mr. Penn, who knew the future of his new land lay in agriculture. Since its founding, the Keystone state has been blessed with visionaries who have appreciated and protected the natural world around them. Thanks to one of them, Pierre du Pont, we may today enjoy a veritable Eden in its eastern part-- Longwood Gardens. ABS board member, Tomasz Aniśko, Curator of Plants at Longwood, with assistant Elisabeth Hall, gives us a fascinating look at the historic boxwood at Longwood in this issue. (And stay tuned...in the Fall, we will travel to the western end of Mr. Penn's Woods, for a look at a different kind of botanical treasure!)

Our "ABS in Action...and other news of the Society" is packed with important information for ABS members, reported by numerous contributors. Be sure to take it all in! Sincere thanks to all who have made the Summer '13 issue a very special one, including new board member Ron Williams, who produced an enticing book review on a riveting book by board member Tomasz Aniśko! Yep, the curator at Longwood! What a great bunch we have in this organization!

The Spring issue of the Bulletin carried with it a membership renewal form for '13-'14, due by May 1. We hope you enjoyed the Bulletin and that you found and used the renewal form. It is important that your membership is current and active! ABS needs you! Thanks!

**MEMBERSHIP ALERT!**  
**REMEMBER TO RENEW**

Louise T. Smith, Editor



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



#### **ABS 53rd Annual Meeting**

The American Boxwood Society convened for its 53rd annual meeting and symposium May 19-21, in Williamsburg, Virginia, under overcast and occasionally rainy skies. The opening event of the meeting, the Williamsburg Ghost Tour, was held on the first evening with rain providing suitably atmospheric conditions! But spirits were not dampened—neither ours nor theirs! Monday morning found us boarding the bus for a tour of the extensive gardens of Bill and Linda Pinkham in Carrollton, just over the James River. Under overcast skies we were treated to a beautiful garden holding a huge selection of plants. A swath of purple poppies sweeping down a hillside was fabulous. The structure plants of the garden were varied and interesting, boxwood among them. Box lunches were enjoyed on the lawn, after which we journeyed to Charlie's Antiques and Restorations where we saw many garden adornments and some found "must have" items to take home. Back at the hotel, attendees found clearing skies and took to the streets of Williamsburg for hearty Virginia fare.

## ABS in Action (continued)

Tuesday morning we delved into the conference programs. Miranda Ganci, graduate student at NC State, and Dr. Christi Palmer, IR-4 Ornamental Horticulture Program manager, gave important and well-illustrated presentations of studies on boxwood blight. Their reports centered around management of the blight until more is understood about it. For the time being, it seems that pre-blight treatment with a fungicide is the only hope to hold it at bay, as no means of eradication has been discovered once blight has been found to be present. It is vitally important to understand these chemicals and their use, and the presenters provided helpful information on these. (See Miranda Ganci's report, p. 9)

Wesley Greene of Colonial Williamsburg garden fame, and vegetable display garden chief, gave a fascinating talk on heirloom plants—heirloom for us, but not for the colonists! He recommended several that are much better than the hybrids, kale being one of them, its leaves used in spring and its flowers in Autumn. (Greene is author of the gardening book, *Vegetable Gardening the Colonial Williamsburg Way*.)

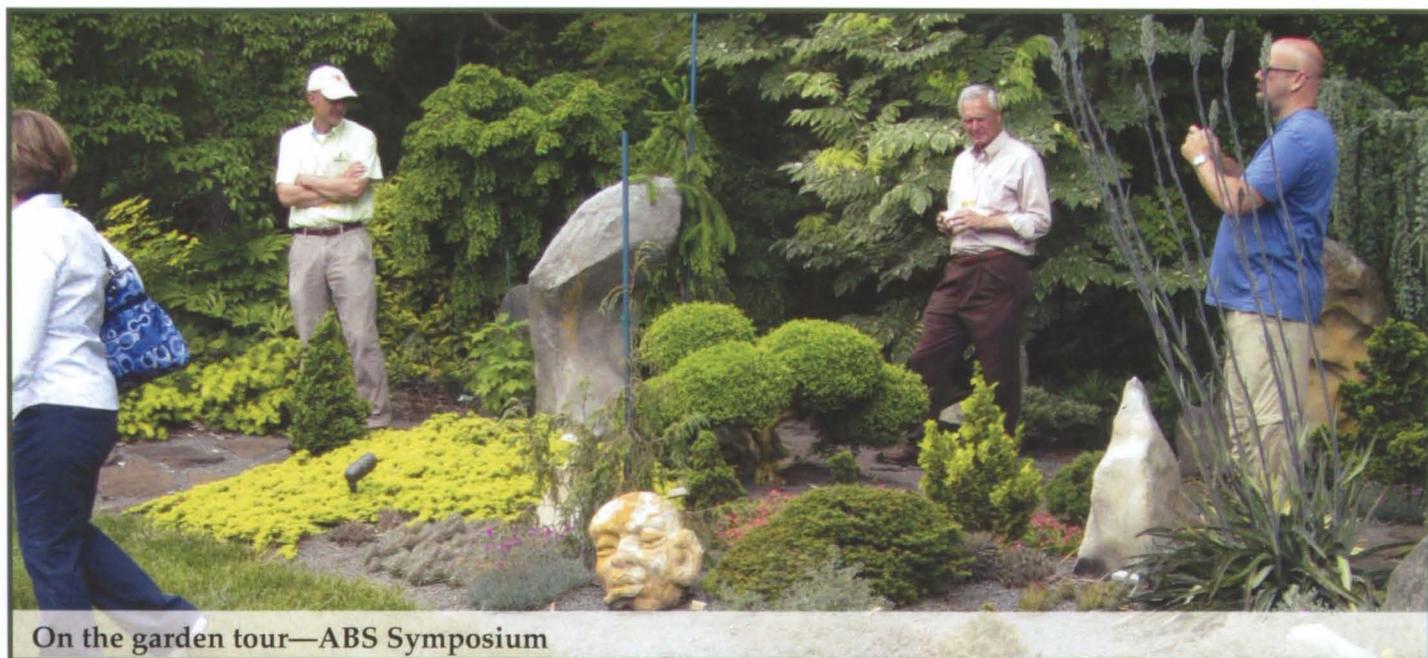
Following lunch, we heard Ronald Woolley, Landscape Supervisor, Colonial Williamsburg, who spoke on "Boxwood for Mid-Atlantic Gardens—What's Changing?" New cultivars are being accepted and are improving garden structure and textures, while allowing more versatility and diversity, the latter helping with pest problems. Along the way he acquainted us with some of the issues faced in maintaining a garden that is tourist- and often student-occupied most of the time!

The annual meeting of the ABS membership gave members opportunities to vote on a number of items. Members received a slate of nominations prepared by Board member Katherine Ward which was unanimously accepted. (See Minutes of Annual Meeting in this issue). Two new board members were elected, Ron Williams of Indiana and John Makar of Georgia. Board member Hugh Crump, North Carolina, was elected to the vice-presidency. Bylaws revisions were explained and approved by the membership. (See your Spring Bulletin to review the changes.)

Following a successful auction of plants and garden items and a delightful buffet banquet featuring Virginia favorites, we heard Dr. Gerald Johnson, renowned geologist and retired professor from the College of William and Mary. His talk about the geology from millions of years ago, was fun and informative, and his collection of fossils gave members a "hands-on" opportunity to understand what is right under our feet!

A wonderful gathering! Start making plans now to attend the 2014 symposium in Washington, DC.

Reported by Tish Iorio



On the garden tour—ABS Symposium

Laurie McMinn

## ...other news of the Society

### Brief Biographies of New Board Members

John Lockwood Makar (3 year term) was raised in Tulsa, OK, and received his Bachelor's Degree (Business Administration in Finance) from the University of Texas at Austin. After backpacking for two years around the world and teaching, he returned to Tulsa and worked as a property tax representative for an oil company and later in the international department of a bank in Atlanta. His travels inspired him to launch an international youth hostel in time for the 1996 Olympics. At that time he became seriously interested in gardening and became a Master Gardener, finding his calling in Georgia's busy gardening scene. He found time, alongside his busy work schedule, to serve on the Board of the American Hydrangea Society and chaired their annual garden tour. "My happy discovery of the American Boxwood Society has brought many good friends my way. I was privileged to organize the first (and not the last, I hope!) ABS Symposium in Atlanta in 2009," he says. John continues with his garden design and installation work in the Atlanta area.

Ron Williams, a native of Indiana, attended Indiana University and the University of South Florida where he received his MA in physiology. After completing his MA, he returned to Indiana to join his father in business. Today, Ron and his wife, Linda, live in Fishers (a suburb of Indianapolis) and own a small travel company, Garden Travelers. They have two grown children and three granddaughters (two in Indiana and one in Virginia) who occupy much of their non-gardening time. Although he chose a career in business, Ron has made good use of his science education through his many botanical hobbies. He has continued to grow orchids since his Florida days, going on to become an American Orchid Society judge and past president, and he hones his home garden, which is frequently on garden tours. Ron is an active volunteer in his community, serving on the board of the historic Ambassador House and Heritage Gardens as supervisor of the gardens (where he has installed much boxwood). Three years ago, Ron and Linda participated in their first ABS symposium, and have enthusiastically supported the Society as new members since that time.

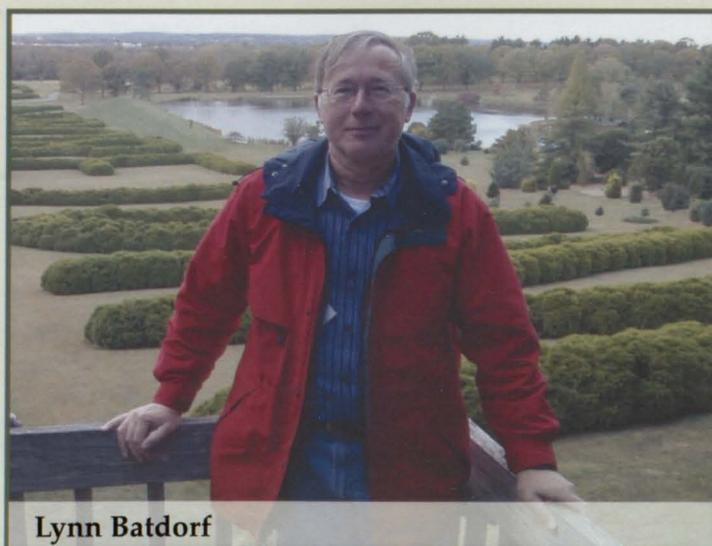
We welcome these new board members and appreciate their participation in the life of the ABS!



### Lynn Batdorf Retires

In announcing his retirement from the U.S. National Arboretum, Lynn Batdorf referred to the wisdom of L.H. Bailey who advocated "training oneself for 25 years, working for 25 years, and doing what one pleases for 25 years". After 36 years at the Arboretum, Lynn has decided to get started on that last segment of the plan—retirement! While at the Arboretum he served with distinction as Curator of the National Boxwood Collection. (Lynn has been a member of the ABS since 1977 and became a board member in '79. In 1985 he assumed the duties of Registrar for the ABS in its role as International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Buxus L.*, a position reconfirmed by the ABS Board in their spring meeting.)

Asked to point out highlights of his career, Lynn reports that in his 36 years at the National Arboretum, his work as curator of the boxwood collection there has been a source of great satisfaction. Renovating, expanding, documenting and authenticating the collection has made it possible for it to become a National Collection certified by the North American Plant Collection Consortium. But he relishes most of all the production and success of his two books, *The Boxwood Handbook*, and *Boxwood, An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. We salute Lynn for his achievements which have advanced the knowledge and enjoyment of boxwood, and extend best wishes to him in his retirement.



Lynn Batdorf

**A new *Buxus* cultivar!**

Charles Fooks reports on the development of 'National Tower': *Buxus sempervirens* 'National Tower' was selected from a group of open pollinated seedlings collected from the National Arboretum in the fall of 1998. That year was the first year of a planned five-year project to collect, grow and evaluate *Buxus* seedlings from the National Arboretum, the theory being that seedlings produced from such a large collection of mature flowering and fruiting plants would result in a few of the progeny exhibiting unique characteristics that would be of value to the gardening public. With a permit from Lynn Batdorf and assisted by my wife Lucy, we made our first collection in September, 1998. We pulled small one-year seedlings, avoiding the larger ones. We gathered a few from each bed over the entire collection, in order to get as large a sampling as possible. This was repeated in the years 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002.

The collected seedlings were potted in 2 1/2" pots and then stepped up to a one-gallon container. They were field planted from the one-gallon container. The seedlings collected in 1998 and 1999 were field planted in November 2001. These were grown the same as our production boxwood with the exception of pruning. These seedlings were allowed to develop naturally with no pruning whatsoever. There were 689 plants collected in 1998 and 1999 and planted on 4' centers in three rows.



Charles Fooks

We began evaluating the plants in 2006. Six people made evaluations and selections independent of each other over the next three years. None of them knew what had been selected previously. Among the evaluators were Clyde Weber, a former ABS president and George Schumacher, former ABS board member. Also included was George Rosenkranz, a knowledgeable and discriminating local landscaper who knows a good plant when he sees one. Out of the 689 plants, we finalized 19 for further evaluation. These 19 plants were re-evaluated in 2009 and narrowed down to seven. In 2010, from the seven, we selected **1-98-83** as worthy of registration. We have been observing this plant since the second year in the field. Its very narrow upright profile suggested it might be a fastigiata plant similar to Graham Blandy or Dee Runk.

**1-98-83** is fastigiata, currently 7'4" tall by 17" wide at its widest point. The color is a good medium green. The leaves are typical. The branches emerge along the single trunk and sweep upward at about a 60 degree angle, giving a decidedly upright form with a strong structure. The winter snows of 2009/2010 provided a good test. Many boxwood in the same field were bent and broken by the heavy snow load, even some old reliable cultivars. **1-98-83** suffered no damage at all and no branches were even slightly bent down. Other ABS members who have seen and expressed admiration for this plant are Paul Saunders, Jan Carter and Bennett Saunders.

We have selected the name 'National Tower' to acknowledge its origin, the National Arboretum, with 'Tower' being descriptive of its natural form.

**Charles T. Fooks**

The American Boxwood Society  
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Membership  
Tuesday, May 21, 2013; Holiday Inn Gateway, Williamsburg, VA

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**Call to Order** President Boyd

The meeting was called to order at 2:32 P.M.

**Minutes** Secretary Carter

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of March 27, 2012 as printed in *The Boxwood Bulletin*, V.51/No.4/p.14, were presented. They were accepted without change. [Katherine Ward/ Laurie McMinn/unanimous by voice]

**Financial** Treasurer Saunders

The Treasurer presented a verbal financial report, suggesting the finances of the Society are in good condition.

**President's Report** President Boyd

The President offered a quick review of the previous year's activities.

**Executive Director's Report** E.D. Rinker

The Executive Director alerted the membership to the possibility of a sales tax being imposed on all on-line sales. This would affect the sales of ABS publications and apparel. The Director prompted those in attendance and all members to contact their legislators to oppose this measure.

**Committee Reports**

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**Bylaws** Jan Carter for the Committee

The Committee presented the timeline of the presentation of the amended Bylaws. The tests of timeliness of review, publication to the membership and notice of meeting to vote on adoption, have all been met. Mr. Carter reviewed the cover letter explaining the rationale for updating; the Committee's approach to addressing the grammar, syntax, continuity and logic within the Bylaws; and the highlights of the few major changes.

The motion to adopt the Bylaw proposal as presented passed  
[Jan Carter/Walter Carell, Jr./unanimous by voice]

**Registrar** Lynn Batdorf, Jan Carter

Registrar Batdorf has submitted a thorough and highly detailed report of the Registrar's activities over the last five years to the Commission on Nomenclature and Registration of the International Society of Horticultural Science. The Commission will meet in Beijing, China in July 2013 to review and re-appoint the various Registration Authorities. A complete listing of registered names for *Buxus* accompanied the required basic report.

**Membership** Chair Louise Smith, E.D. Rinker

The number of members who have renewed stands at 160. The total for all categories in 2012 was 309. Renewals continue to arrive regularly. A reminder mailing is planned.

A time of dedicated silence was observed in memory of all ABS members who passed in the last year.

**Boxwood Bulletin** Editor Louise Smith

The next issue is planned to be out by the end of June. This is the first issue of the new membership year; therefore, timeliness of membership renewal is essential to continued receipt of the Bulletin.

The Editor reminds the membership that the Fall 2013 issue will be her last as Editor. It is essential that the search for a replacement be concluded. (continued next page)

## **...other news of the Society (continued)**

### **Blandy Arboretum**      Director Carell, Bennett Saunders

Mr. Carell presented a collection of photos and working drawings that lay out the possible expansion of the Memorial Garden. The plan work has drawn the support of the leadership at Blandy.

### **U.S. National Arboretum**      Jan Carter, ABS Stakeholder Representative

Lynn Batdorf will retire as Curator of the National Boxwood Collection on May 31, 2013. The ABS will be represented by several members on that day. Plans for replacement of the Curator have not been announced. Mr. Batdorf served at the Arboretum for 36 years.

Budget constraints have resulted in new public hours of operation. Beginning May 14th, the Arboretum will be closed Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

### **Symposium 2014**

Mr. Bennett Saunders has agreed to serve as Chair for this event.

A May date in the Washington, D.C. area is still planned. While the possibility of a delegation from the EBTS is diminished, a probable 'international summit conference' on Boxwood Blight may have interest in convening as an adjunct to the Symposium.

### **Symposium 2015**      Director Aniško

A May date for the event is planned, with Longwood Gardens as the focal point. A program of tours in the greater Philadelphia area and education is being developed.

### **Symposium 2016**

Review of possibilities; Winchester, VA is one suggestion

### **Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS)**

The ABS will have a display booth at the 2014 Show, January 8-10, Wednesday through Friday, at the Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD. Members who may be interested in attending and helping to staff the booth are encouraged to contact Director Carell. This event has proved to be a splendid outreach to the horticulture industry, resulting in new members and publication sales.

### **Unfinished Business**

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#### **New Business**

Director Katherine Ward presented the report from the Nominating Committee.

The slate is: President-John Boyd, III, Vice President- Hugh Crump, 2nd Vice President- Charles Fooks, Secretary-Jan Carter, Treasurer-Bennett Saunders, Director for 2015-Ron Williams, Directors for 2016-Walter Carell, Jr., John Lockwood Makar, Laurie McMinn

Seeing no additional nominations from the floor, the Chair asked for a motion of acclamation for the slate, which passed. [Ward/Iorio/unanimous by voice]

### **Adjournment**

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The Chair adjourned the meeting without objection at 3:45 P.M.

#### **Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 21, 2013, immediately following the Annual Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by President Boyd.

The order of business was suspended without objection.

Director Helen Hecht was nominated and elected unanimously to serve on the Executive Committee.

Mr. Lynn Batdorf was nominated and unanimously confirmed to serve as the International Registrar.

Having no further business, the President adjourned the meeting without objection.

# BOX BLIGHT Research

**M**iranda Ganci, Master of Science graduate student, Department of Plant Pathology, NCSU, gave a presentation at the 2013 ABS Symposium, updating members on Box Blight research. The following is her summary of the presentation. The ABS is deeply grateful to Ms. Ganci and her colleagues for this vital ongoing research.

Box blight is a foliar disease which causes blighting and defoliation. Many boxwood species and cultivars are susceptible, including the most widely grown cultivars English and American boxwood, *B. sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' and 'American,' respectively. The disease known as box blight or boxwood blight was detected in the United States in 2011. The American Nursery and Landscape Association partnered with the Horticulture Research Institute in order to assemble a box blight working group. The working group consists of researchers, from universities across the nation, who are working toward understanding more about the pathogen and developing techniques to control the disease. More information about the group can be found at <http://anla.org/knowledgecenter>.

Dr. Kelly Ivors, Dr. Mike Benson, and graduate student, Miranda Ganci of North Carolina State University (NCSU) have been researching box blight control since the spring of 2012. Box blight is caused by a fungal pathogen. The pathogen can produce spores which serve as the infectious agent of the disease. The spores can be transferred from infected plants to healthy plants. Symptoms of the disease include black to brown circular leaf lesions which often have a yellow center and streaking black stem cankers. Photographs of the symptoms and other information about box blight can be found at <http://plantpath.cals.ncsu.edu/ornamentals>.

The fungal pathogen is most aggressive in the spring and in the fall. If plants are infected, symptoms will occur in cool and humid conditions and will most often show up on the shady side of the plant. Box blight can be confirmed on symptomatic plants by county extension agents, master gardeners, or university disease diagnosis clinics.

Box blight can be prevented and/or managed by following some key tips. Proper diagnosis of box blight or any other boxwood problem is the first step towards controlling the problem. Box blight can be spread by humans, animals, and equipment. Understanding how the pathogen can spread and utilizing good sanitation practices can reduce the risk of spreading box blight. Box blight prevention and management will consist of several control techniques. At NCSU experiments have been conducted to evaluate the susceptibility of boxwood species and cultivars to box blight and the preventative efficacy of fungicides. Results of the experiments can be found at <http://plantpath.cals.ncsu.edu/ornamentals>.

In the box blight susceptibility experiments, field resistance of boxwood species and cultivars was evaluated. A wide range in susceptibility of boxwood plants to box blight was found. Four cultivars were identified as partially resistant based on minimal symptom development, *B. microphylla* var. *japonica* 'Green Beauty', *B. sinica* var. *insularis* 'Nana', *B. harlandii*, and *B. microphylla* 'Golden Dream'. The results are based on a single experiment season and further testing will be conducted to verify the results and evaluate additional cultivars. Appropriate cultivar selection will be an important long term strategy for managing the disease in nurseries and landscapes.

In the fungicide efficacy experiments, preventative application of fungicides was evaluated. Fungicides which contain the active ingredients chlorothalonil and fludioxonil were the most effective at preventing box blight. If fungicides are used in a preventative application program, the fungicides should be applied when the weather conditions are most suitable for disease development and before activities which can lead to disease transmission, such as before pruning and trimming.

Box blight has the potential to be a devastating disease; however, researchers are working together to develop prevention and management techniques that can reduce the impact of box blight on boxwood growers and enthusiasts.

**Miranda Ganci**

## Storied Landscape:

# Boxwood at Longwood Gardens

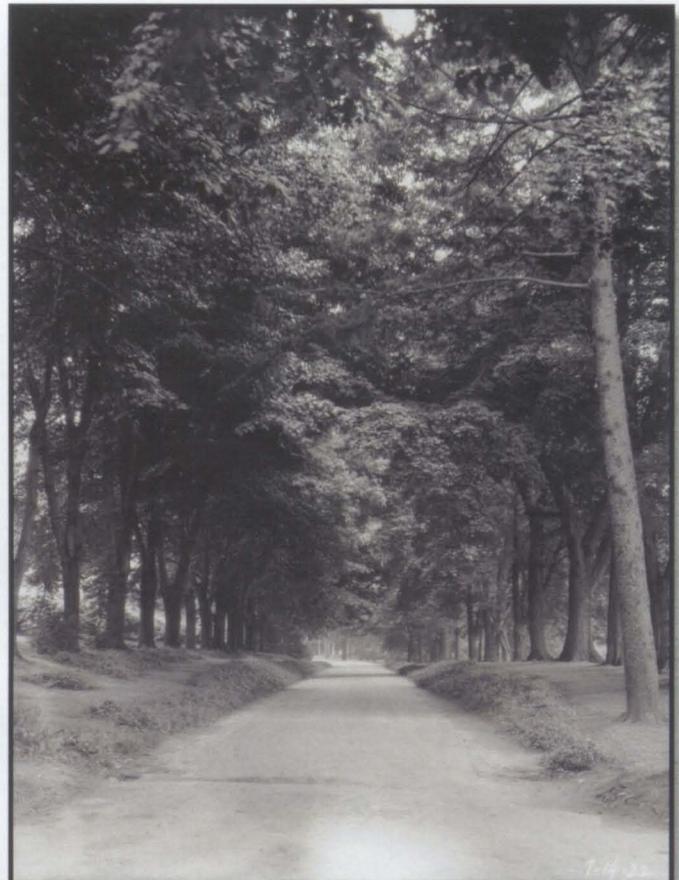
Elisabeth Hall and Dr. Tomasz Aniśko

**B**oxwood is a plant that embodies the story of Longwood Gardens; from its inception as a Quaker arboretum to the amazing feats of horticulture that led to the creation of gardens we know today, boxwood has been a part of Longwood's development. Treasured by the garden's founders, boxwood has been an important part of the landscape since the beginning. In the 18th century, when brothers Joshua and Samuel Peirce first began planting their arboretum on their farm in Chester County, Pennsylvania, they included boxwood in their collection. After the property was purchased by industrialist Pierre S. du Pont in 1906, boxwood continued to be highly valued. It was the first piece of today's iconic Main Fountain Garden to be planted, and, in fact, boxwood was planted before any of the fountains were planned or built. Large colonial-era plants were moved miles to create a mature landscape that impressed all visitors to the gardens. The legacy of boxwood in the gardens is a testament to Longwood's dedication to excellence in horticulture and a lasting demonstration of the heights horticulture can achieve.

The property that was to become Longwood Gardens started out as a working farm, purchased by George Pearce from William Penn in 1700. The land grant remained in the family for over two centuries, and it was George Pearce's twin great-grandsons, Joshua and Samuel Peirce, who founded the arboretum on the property. Born in 1766, the brothers continued to farm the land they inherited until Samuel's death in 1838 and Joshua's in 1851. Being Quakers, the Peirce brothers had a deep respect for nature as well as a profound interest in botany. This led them to begin planting their arboretum in 1798. It eventually grew to cover 15 acres, as the brothers collected trees from as far north as the Catskill Mountains in New York and south to Maryland. The trees they acquired were densely planted in avenues running east and south of the house. Between the trees, they planted American

boxwood. In the mid 19th century, George Peirce is reputed to have turned croquet balls from the wood of *Buxus sempervirens* var. *arborescens*. The Peirces also planted the driveway to their house with alternating sugar maples and boxwood. Some of these boxwood are still alive today (although the sugar maples along the drive have been removed). They are an enduring reminder of the beginnings of Longwood. The Peirces began a centuries-long dedication to planting and growing boxwood.

In 1906, Pierre S. du Pont (1870-1954) purchased the Peirce property in order to save the arboretum's trees, which were in danger of being cut for lumber.



The maple allée along the lane to Peirce's Park and residence, c. late 19th century. The boxwood planted between the sugar maples were among the first to be planted at Longwood.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens

He expanded the garden greatly, and much of the landscape as it stands today was created by du Pont between 1907 and the 1930s. Mature specimens were often brought in for an instant effect, and this included English boxwood. Local homeowners, hearing that du Pont was buying up boxwood, would offer their specimens for sale. John Johnson, who was the Grounds Superintendent at Longwood for much of his 47 year career, recalled:

“The boxwoods throughout the gardens came from a lot of places. Mr. du Pont would get word of an estate that had boxwood for sale, and he’d send Mr. Furness [a local garden designer/nurseryman] or me to look at it. I remember one time Mr. du Pont got a letter from a lady down in Millsboro, Delaware. She sent him a

measurement of her boxwood, and he got me to go down and measure. He told me, if it was what she said it was, to buy it. It was what she said, so I bought the whole lot, and it was replaced in summer around the garden, in front of the Conservatory there, at the fountain basins.”

Du Pont hired Lewis and Valentine, the largest landscape contracting firm in America in the years leading up to the Great Depression. The company was dedicated to moving mature trees, and there was no limit to the size of tree they would move. They were contracted to find large trees and shrubs and move them to Longwood. Boxwood were among the plants they looked for, and they would buy exceptional specimens from homeowners, dig them up, and move the plants to Longwood.



The large boxwood as it stood for over two centuries near Lancaster, PA. Lewis & Valentine, landscape engineers, were able to successfully transport the plant with roots intact.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens



The enormous boxwood was moved at night to avoid traffic. It was moved 50 miles to its new home at Longwood, no small feat in 1928.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens

Johnson noted “A lot of the boxwood came from North and South Carolina. Those fellows would bring it up here by the truckload, and [du Pont would] buy them. A lot of it came from north of here, like Lancaster County.” In all, Lewis and Valentine planted several hundred mature trees and shrubs from estates, nurseries, and the wild from 14 states to turn a cornfield into a green backdrop for the Main Fountain Garden.

In the Main Fountain Garden, boxwood are a key element of design. Early letters refer to the Main Fountain Garden as the “Sunken Boxwood Garden.” Starting in 1921, boxwood were planted along the north side of the garden, followed by a boxwood hedge paralleling what would become the upper canal. During the design of the fountains, du Pont continued to think inside the box. The fountains and supporting canals were built inside the framework of these boxwood hedges. Taking inspiration from European gardens seen during his travels, du Pont began to create a magnificent fountain garden of his own. Upon seeing the Villa d’Este in Italy, du Pont said “It would be nice to have something like this at home.” He began work on designs for the fountains at Longwood, aiming to create a display to rival any other. The five-acre Main Fountain Garden was years in the making, and the final result is an awe-inspiring fountain system which holds 675,000 gallons of water and contains 380 fountainheads.

Before the fountains were ever designed, however, boxwood were thought of first. They were planted eight years before the canals for the fountains were constructed. Hedges ran along the north side of the garden and large specimen plants, moved from homes and nurseries across the state, were planted in the lawn. The central feature of the garden was a colossal boxwood which was 12 feet tall and 80 feet in circumference when it was moved to its new home at Longwood in 1928. The landscapers Lewis and Valentine relocated the giant boxwood fifty miles from Lancaster County, where it had been growing in its original location since 1720. Transporting it from Lancaster required a ball of earth 13 feet in diameter and three feet deep. It was moved on a 40-ton-capacity dray, and telephone wires had to be removed and overhanging tree limbs tied up to make way for the enormous plant. The total cost, including delivery, was \$8,250. Adjusting for inflation, this would be about \$105,000 in today’s dollars. The newspapers of the time covered the story extensively, and the boxwood even had its own publicist to handle inquiries. After its long journey, the boxwood took its place of honor in the center of the Main Fountain Garden, where it grew for many years. The feat of horticulture and engineering involved in moving such a massive specimen remains one of the most amazing accomplished at Longwood.

After the boxwood were planted, the fountains were designed and built. The boxwood were



Boxwood were the first to be planted in the Main Fountain Garden. In this 1920s photograph, the original cornfield can still be seen in the background.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens

carefully considered during the construction of the canals. Piping was put in where it would not interfere with the plantings. By the 1930s, the boxwood was surrounded by a circular canal and was the focal point of the Main Fountain Garden lawn. From 1929 to 1933, Lewis and Valentine planted a thousand feet of four foot tall boxwood hedge to line the Lower Canal and Round Basins of the fountain garden. Approximately 300 more feet of boxwood was planted to line the canals around the giant central plant. The sheer numbers of plants, combined with the age and quality of the specimens, created an instant effect. The garden immediately had the appearance of a much older era, with transplanted mature plants and the timeless elegance of the boxwood. Du Pont valued his boxwood greatly and was very interested in maintaining their health and vigor. French drains were installed to improve poor drainage conditions and avoid the spread of *Phytophthora*. The gardeners took special care of the giant boxwood from Lancaster, as well as the other specimens, and steps were taken to provide defenses from any harm, including bad weather.

Discouraged by storm damage early on, du Pont carefully protected all the boxwood in the Main Fountain Garden from ice and snow in the winter by building wooden boxes to place over the shrubs.

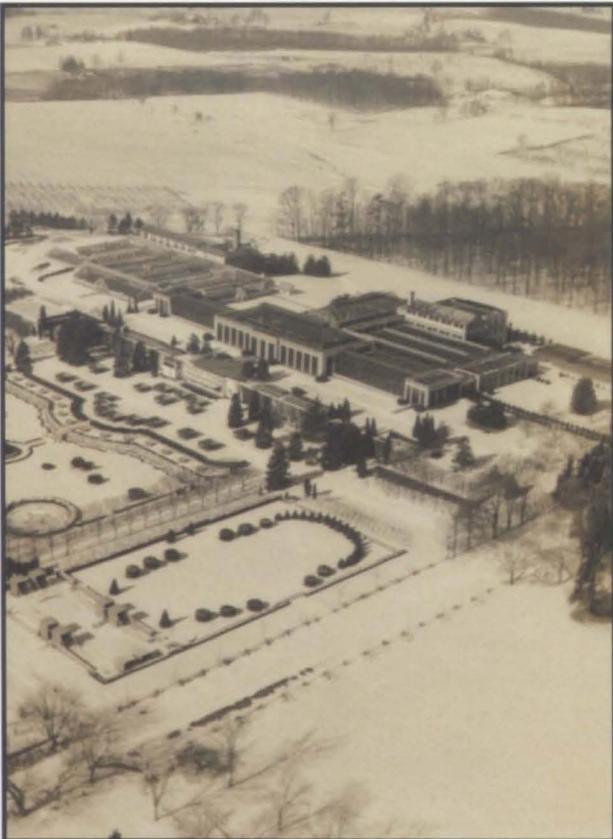
His nephew, W. W. Laird, reminisced: "In the winter time you could look over the garden and see nothing but boxes out there. And Uncle Pierre took great glee in pointing out his 'box garden'." This practice continued until around the time of Pierre's death, when the larger boxwood were too large to fit in the boxes that had been built. According to Johnson, "We used to have buildings we put over them every winter, till the box got so big we couldn't do it. Everything was covered with these slatted buildings, and it just looked like shantytown down there in the wintertime." The gardeners at Longwood were able to prevent winter losses of du Pont's beloved plants for many years. Tragically, in March of 1958, a severe blizzard dropped 46 inches of snow in parts of Pennsylvania, with some areas of Chester County receiving more than three feet of snow. The storm devastated the boxwood in the Main Fountain Garden and seriously damaged the majestic plant from Lancaster. Despite careful pruning, it never recovered and was eventually removed. The place of honor in the center of the Main Fountain Garden has since been filled by a succession of boxwood plants, although none have lived up to the striking size and form of the original.

The story of boxwood at Longwood is one with a long history. It began with the founding of the



The upper canal was built in 1929, eight years after the landscaping had been completed. Work was carefully completed around the boxwood.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens



In this aerial photograph from the late 1930s, the wooden slat structures built to protect the boxwood from winter damage can be seen. Unfortunately, a 1958 snowstorm decimated the giant boxwood with 46" of wet, heavy snow.

courtesy of Longwood Gardens

arboretum and continues today. Boxwood's legacy is part of the cultural landscape of Longwood, and gardeners and staff carry on the original spirit of the garden's founders. Visitors today can find boxwood in many areas of the gardens. Research continues into disease and pest-resistant varieties, and exploration trips have been undertaken in recent years. The traditional design of the Main Fountain Garden remains intact, and the boxwood planted by the Peirce brothers still grows in their allées. Longwood today is a garden which demonstrates the past and present of the genus *Buxus*.

Elisabeth Hall is the curatorial intern and Tomasz Aniško is the curator of plants at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA.

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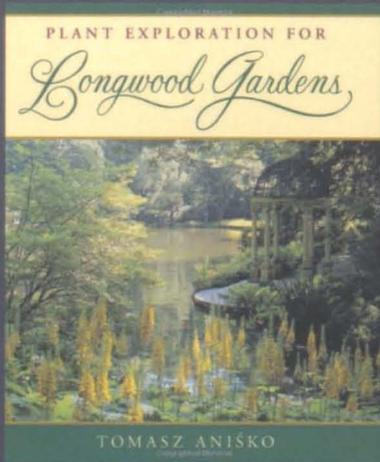
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## The Bulletin Bookshelf

### Plant Exploration for Longwood Gardens

By Tomasz Aniśko

Timber Press, 2006 ISBN 0-88192-738-4

A recommendation to “buy” was formulated immediately after reading the first chapter of *Plant Exploration for Longwood Gardens*!

Dr. Tomasz Aniśko, Curator of Plants at Longwood Gardens, presents a unique work, a review of over 50 plant treks sponsored by Longwood from the early 1950's to its centennial in 2006. The plants brought back to Longwood from these expeditions gave to the Gardens and the world of horticulture many prized introductions. The expeditions are presented by country or region: Himalaya, regions of Japan, South Korea, China, Australasia, Africa, Russia, Europe, the Caribbean and South America. A most interesting survey of the geography of the location, including topography and weather, previews each section.

The first area covered, Himalaya and adjacent regions, introduces the reader to the incredible difficulty of plant collecting, true even to this day. The explorers' journeys were fraught with hardship—flooding, precipitous trails, a lack of adequate help (porters) for managing the essential supplies (roads were essentially non-existent), one-board-wide swinging bridges over terrifying gorges, and issues with illness, food, water and shelter. The author weaves his story into a sort of “bring ‘em back alive” adventure—the reader soon expects to discover that not only a fantastic rhododendron or camellia has been collected, but that possibly the first living *T.rex* or King Kong is in the collecting bag! (At the very least, Dr. Aniśko has laid out the format for the next reality TV show!) The reader will find many plant friends in this book. Interestingly, for this reader, orchids are richly documented and camellias are frequently referenced.

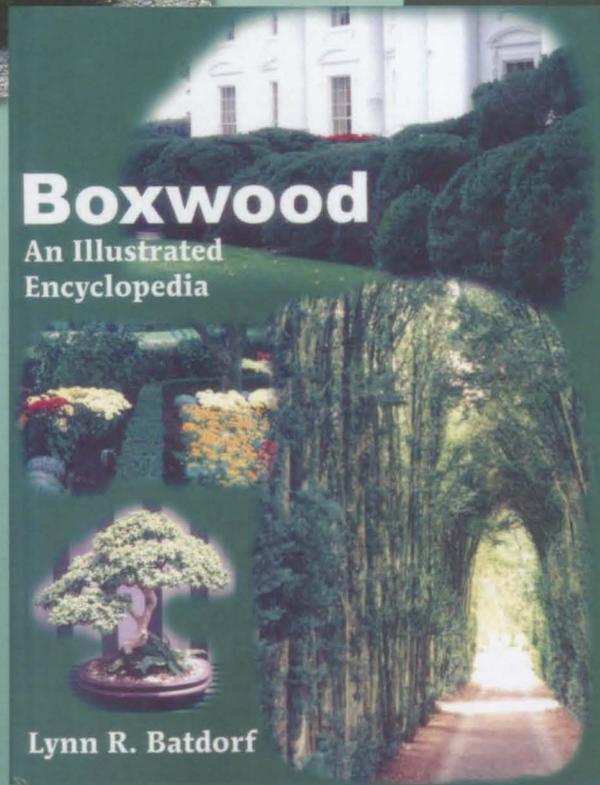
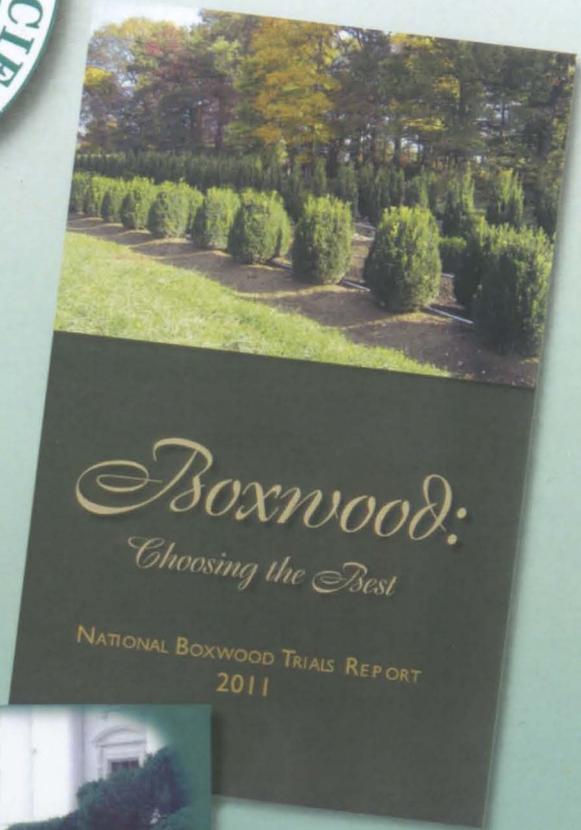
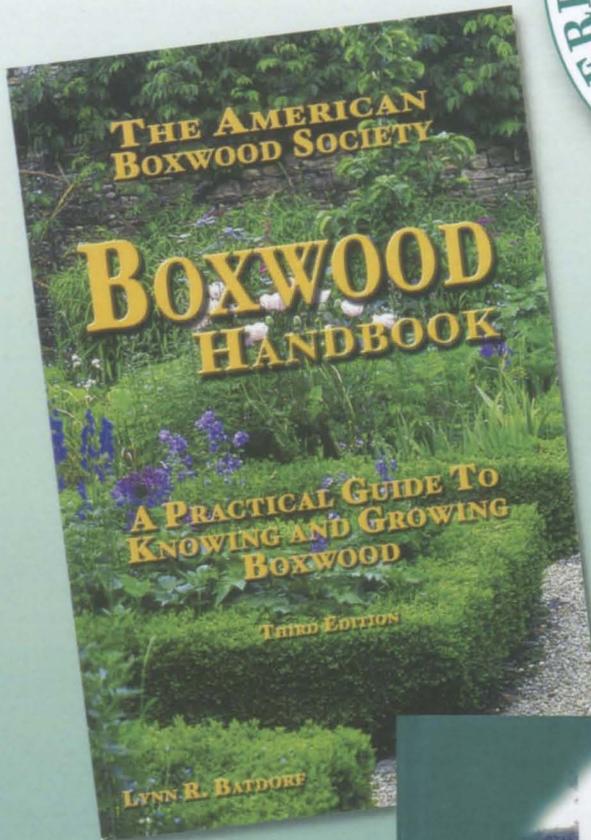
For the boxwood enthusiast, the book is a revelation. In the section on “Russia and Its Neighbors”

we find longtime ABS members Charles Fooks and Paul and Tatum Saunders, Henry Frierson and Lynn Batdorf among expedition members! Dr. Aniśko reveals that in Georgia, *Buxus* is revered as a sacred plant in boxwood forests that may surround ancient shrines; his picture of a boxwood tree standing at the entrance to a 6th C. church is stirring. “Clearly the tree was not meant to be mere ornamentation, but had acquired powerful spiritual significance as an arboreal embodiment of the promise of eternal life,” he writes. (Seedlings in the cracks of the ancient walls were left undisturbed by the team.) There are reports of 15-meter tall boxwood trees, in some cases, logged. (Logging of these trees has been regulated or banned at various times.) Many of these forests are too shady for seedlings to develop, but given a little light, the author says, the ground becomes littered with seedlings of many shades of green, leaf margins and even variegation.

Dr. Aniśko participated in seven of the expeditions described in the book. The historic photos and his personal camera ability are remarkable; he presents many beautifully composed photos of individual plants and vistas of the local landscape. He appears to be gifted at balancing a camera with one hand and using the other to gain a hand hold on a precipitous mountain ridge path!

The world owes a great debt of thanks to Pierre S. du Pont for saving what would become the core of Longwood Gardens. The same thanks must be offered to the intrepid explorers and to Tomasz Aniśko for his scholarly and skillfully presented record of a plant world that is beyond even the imagination of the average horticulturist.

By Ron Williams



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