PERENNIALY INSPIRED

What’s Now and Next in Horticulture

The future of the American garden and the use of native grasses and sedges are among the topics at the annual winter seminar at The Conference Center at Sheppard Pratt. The Perennial Plant Association and the Horticultural Society of Maryland are sponsors of the day-long event on Saturday, Feb. 27, 2016.

Landscape architect Thomas Rainer, of Arlington, Va., writes the Grounded Design blog and is co-author of Planting in a Post-Wild World. His topic will be The Next Renaissance of Horticulture: How Understanding Plants as Systems Will Make Horticulture More Relevant and Creative.

Jules Bruck is a landscape architect and associate professor of landscape design at the University of Delaware, teaching design process, field sketching and planting design. Her topic: Biodiversity Planning in Design.

Karl Gercens oversees the changing displays at Longwood Gardens. His talk, Keeping ‘Perennials’ Refreshed in the Garden, will explore ways gardeners can gain fresh perspectives that will allow to them unleash their creativity.

Janet Davis is a landscape designer and co-owner of Hill House Farm & Nursery in Castleton, Va., which grows and sells U.S. native plants. Her topic will be Graminoids: Using Our Native Grasses, Sedges and Rushes in the Landscape.

Barry R. Yinger, is a horticulturist in York County, Pa., has led plant-collecting expeditions in Japan, Korea and elsewhere in Asia and has introduced more than 1,000 plant species into cultivation in the United States. His topic: Coming Home.

The seminar sells out each year, so register early. Sign up by Feb. 13 for the early registration rate. See the enclosed flyer or go to www.mdhorticulture.org for more information.

LECTURE SERIES

Tuesday, MARCH 8, 7:30 p.m.

Patrick Cullina

Shopping for Eden: Gathering Perspective on the Pursuit of Plants and Gardens

Cullina, an award-winning horticulturist and landscape designer best known for his work on New York’s High Line, will explore meaningful plant acquisition and the factors that contribute to their successful integration into compelling designs.

Tuesday, APRIL 12, 7:30 p.m.

Sandy Clinton, FASLA

Gardens Transformed

Clinton’s painterly approach and extensive plant knowledge combine in exuberant garden designs with that unexpected “wow” factor. She will share with us how to transform that vision into lush, imaginative reality and take advantage of the seasonal rhythms of the landscape.

Tuesday, MAY 10, 7:30 p.m.

Kerry Ann Mendez

Superhero Flowering Shrubs and Groundcovers

In her recent book, The Right-Size Flower Garden, Mendez shares her strategies for simplifying outdoor spaces with smart, time-saving designs that utilize exceptional plants. In this new talk she will focus on eye-catching, low-maintenance flowering shrubs and groundcovers that provide interest throughout the seasons, with an emphasis on drought-tolerant and pollinator-friendly varieties.

For more information, visit www.mdhorticulture.org

Lectures are held in the Vollmer Center auditorium at Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209. Members are required to show a current membership card for admission to lectures. Guests of members also receive free admission. In case of severe weather, check the HSM website for any cancellation bulletin.
HSM Honor Roll

We thank the following volunteers (members as well as non-members) who have supported the Society’s programs in recent months.

For the Sponsorship Program: Sally Barker

For the Lecture Series Committee: Paula Simon and Mary Jo Sherrod, coordinators; Helene Clapperton, Muffin Evander, John Fitzpatrick, Karen Offutt, Carol Oppenheimer

For Meetings Hospitality: Donna Watts, Jennifer Forrence, Nancy Blois, Pat Sherman

For the Annual Plant & Seed Swap: Mary Jo Sherrod, Peter Bieneman

For the Plant Raffle: Jodi Cantler, Nancy MicKey, Barbara Sutton, Mary Jo Sherrod

For the Silber Sale: Jean and Doug Silber; Ilene Asner, Peter Bieneman, Nancy Blois, Helene Clapperton, Catherine Cook, Jennifer Forrence, Nancy Grabowski, Karen Offutt, Gibson Porter, Michael Rosendale, Mary Jo Sherrod, Paula Simon, Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff, Dorothy Wells

For the Communications Team: Pat Cieslak, telephone messages; Helene Clapperton, webmaster; Carla Hackley, Facebook manager; Nancy Raskin, event coordinator; and John Fitzpatrick, Teresa Dutton and Margaret Wright, August mailing

For the May 2015 issue of The Hort Report: Lisa M. Airey, John Fitzpatrick, contributors; Janet Gross, Lisa Airey and Paula Simon, photographs; Joel Cohen and John Fitzpatrick, proofreaders

New Website

The Horticultural Society of Maryland has a new web site that we think better represents who we are and what we do. The web address is the same—www.mdhorticulture.org—but much else is new.

The Wordpress site will allow us to keep our information better organized and up to date, and make it easier for you to find out what’s happening, renew your membership and sign up for events.

HSM board members Helene Clapperton and Paula Simon worked together on the design of the new site, with the assistance of our new web consultant, Aaron Haslinger of www.primarystudios.com. Please let us know what you think.

Welcome New Members!

Lisa M. Airey
Leigh Erlandson
Martha Frank
Carlisle Hashim
Jane Kidd
Jackson Lehman
Mandy Mahoney
Diane and Philip Marsiglia
Marilyn Miller
Diane Mitchell
Lynette Pinhey
Valerie Schultz
Jane Selewach
Karen Tsukada
Renee Wood
I admired Calycanthus floridus long before I knew what it was.

We have a large stand of Calycanthus floridus on the east edge of our property, thanks to the previous owners. For more than a decade, this lovely green shrub flourished in benign—and in my case, ignorant—neglect.

One day, my wife Susan was showing a landscape architect around our property, discussing future projects. “Oh,” the landscape architect exclaimed as she saw the Calycanthus. “That’s a very good plant.”

It is a very good plant indeed. Calycanthus floridus—known as Allspice, Sweetshrub or Carolina Sweetshrub, among perhaps a dozen common names—is native to woodlands and stream banks in Maryland, the southeastern United States and the Deep South. It can be found in New York and Pennsylvania and in Midwestern states such as Ohio, Illinois and Missouri.

As our own experience proved, Sweetshrub is low maintenance. It prefers humus-rich, moist soil but adapts to a wide variety of conditions. Ours is in clay soil; we have never watered or fertilized or mulched it. It likes sunshine but needs a bit of shelter.

According to most sources, Sweetshrub is resistant to disease and insect problems. Deer—not much of a problem where I live—are said not to like the shrub. Wayside Gardens sells a deer resistant cultivar.

Sweetshrub is deciduous. Its bright green leaves—oval-shaped, 3 to 5 inches long, about 1½ inches across—turn yellow in fall, then drop, revealing the seed pods. It flowers in the spring and early summer: reddish brown blossoms with unusual, strap-like petals.

It is quite fragrant. William Cullina, in his book Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines, calls the fragrance of C. floridus ‘Athens,’ a yellow-flowered cultivar, “a fruit salad perfume of strawberry, banana, mango and peach guaranteed to get your stomach rumbling.” I detect spiced apples in mine; a Master Gardener acquaintance said it reminded her of bubble gum.

Sweetshrub has a suckering habit that can be controlled by careful pruning. Left alone, it will spread. Should you wish to grow Sweetshrub, it is said to be easy to grow from seed or from cuttings.

Despite its many charms, Calycanthus floridus does not seem to be that common in Maryland gardens. Maybe the scent and the odd-looking flowers are to blame, or confusion over its many names. One of these is Strawberry Bush; another is Spicebush, the common name of Lindera benzoin.

A few months ago, a Master Gardener friend and I were in eastern Baltimore County to do a Bay-Wise certification of the property of an elderly couple. The husband, leading the tour, stopped at a tall, attractive shrub and said, “Bet you don’t know what this is.”

I couldn’t resist. “Oh, yes,” I said, laughing. “Calycanthus floridus, also known as Allspice or Carolina Sweetshrub. I have lots of it in my yard.”

PLANT FACTS:
Calycanthus floridus
Common Names: Allspice, Sweetshrub, Carolina Sweetshrub
Hardiness: USDA Zones 4 to 9
Family: Calycanthaceae, native to mid-Atlantic and southeastern United States and the Deep South
Size: 6 to 10 feet high, 6 to 12 feet wide
Appearance: Bright green leaves, yellow in fall; reddish brown flowers
Culture: Sunny but sheltered location, prefers moist, rich soil

SOURCES:
Edge of the Woods Nursery, Wayside Gardens, Bluestone Perennials, Herring Run Nursery (bluewaterbaltimore.org)

REFERENCES:

Harry Merritt, editor of The Hort Report, is a Baltimore County Master Gardener.
Aas Romeo opined so correctly, “What’s in a name?” While he then referred to a “rose,” did he actually mean Rose of Sharon (Hibiscus), Christmas Rose (Helleborus), Japan Rose (Rosa Rugosa), Primrose (Primula), Rosebay (Rhododendron maximum) or Moss Rose (Portulaca)? Well, he typically is portrayed clinging to a climbing rose of the genus Rosa, drinking in the heady scent of a bloom. But without that bit of Latin guiding us to a more specific, though still not explicit, plant, any of the above might be the plant that Romeo is dithering over. We are dependent on botanical nomenclature for communicating a definitive name for each plant and each of its variants.

The orderly classification and naming of plants was instituted in the mid-18th century by the great Swedish naturalist, Carl Linnaeus. His thesis in botany was an exploration of sexual reproduction in plants, and he carefully observed stamens and pistils. Eventually, this led him to develop a new system of grouping plants, which is the basis of taxonomy. As Latin was the universal language among European scholars and scientists, Latin was used as the descriptor language for the nomenclature. Each plant was grouped in a hierarchy (from broadest to narrowest grouping): division, class, order, family, genus and species. In horticulture today, the use of genus and species in Latin is the accepted method of identifying and specifying plant materials, e.g. Acer rubrum represents the tree known as Red Maple. These names are maintained in The International Code of Botanical Names by the International Association for Plant Taxonomy. According to the association, a nomenclature is provided for a plant “…to supply a means of referring to it and to indicate its taxonomic rank.” The association holds a congress every six years, and additions or changes to the Code are debated and voted on.

So why are so many of our well-established plant names changing? Linnaeus scrutinized the number of stamens and pistils of a plant to initiate its groupings with other plants—he was looking for commonalities. Over time, our means of inspecting plants for commonalities has grown more and more sophisticated: from eyeball to microscope, to electron microscope, to biochemistry, to genetic analysis. And this last refinement, the study of plant DNA, has led to discoveries of previously unknown relationships, and to the recognition of genetic distinctions that break the link between previously grouped plants. This research has also clarified evolutionary lines of plants. Consequently, reorganization of plant names is occurring in alignment with the research results; the nomenclature changes reflect a reclassification to a new or different family or genus.

The botanists have reclassified a number of plants common in the Mid-Atlantic states. So this winter, when you are daydreaming through the nursery and seed catalogs, you will find numerous modifications to fairly common plants available in the trade. This perturbs the sellers as much as it confuses the consumers. Many catalogs indicate the changes in parentheses, so both the old and new names appear. Here are some of the modifications you may encounter:

I Say Aster, You Say Symphyotrichum: DNA testing gives some plants new names

By Melanie Moser

As Romeo opined so correctly, “What’s in a name?” While he then referred to a “rose,” did he actually mean Rose of Sharon (Hibiscus), Christmas Rose (Helleborus), Japan Rose (Rosa Rugosa), Primrose (Primula), Rosebay (Rhododendron maximum) or Moss Rose (Portulaca)? Well, he typically is portrayed clinging to a climbing rose of the genus Rosa, drinking in the heady scent of a bloom. But without that bit of Latin guiding us to a more specific, though still not explicit, plant, any of the above might be the plant that Romeo is dithering over. We are dependent on botanical nomenclature for communicating a definitive name for each plant and each of its variants.

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I Say Aster, You Say Symphyotrichum: DNA testing gives some plants new names

By Melanie Moser
Genetic and morphological research has determined that American Asters, while structurally appearing similar to the European Asters, are more closely related to the Goldenrods. Consequently, the New England, New York, and Smooth Asters (previously, *Aster novi-belgii*, *Aster novae-angliae* and *Aster laevis*) have been removed from the *Aster* group and added to the genus *Symphyotrichum*.

Another genus in the Aster family, *Eupatorium*, has been split into three genera: *Eutrochium*, *Conoclinium* and *Ageratina*. Commonly called Joe Pye Weed or Boneset, many outstanding native perennials have been retitled *Ageratina*. *Eupatorium rugosum* is now *Ageratina rugosus*, and *E. maculatum* is *Eutrochium maculatum var. burneri*.

Originally identified and named by Linnaeus himself, the Lesser Celandine or Fig Buttercup (*Ranunculus ficaria*) is an invasive species from Europe and Asia found throughout our woodlands and damp meadows. The “fig” part of its name refers to the root, which resembles clusters of fruit.

It was reclassified as *Ficaria verna*, but apparently it may be restored to its original name (pending). Similarly, *Dendranthema* replaced *Chrysanthemum* a number of years ago, but that decision was reversed, and *Chrysanthemum* prevails today.

Another outstanding perennial, *Montbretia*, was named for the explorer who first discovered the plant; he also happened to be Napoleon’s botanist. The bright, summer-flowering plant’s official name is now *Crocosmia*.

With ongoing botanical studies, we can expect to experience more revisions to the nomenclature of plants. While these modifications can constitute a baffling and annoying nuisance when searching for our favorite plants, we should also appreciate the dedication of the botanist to truth and the challenge to learn and adapt.

Recently retired from teaching, Melanie Moser practices her landscape architecture passions now in watercolors.
An Interview with Max Bloom

By Harry Merritt

This is the latest in a series of articles about leaders of the Horticultural Society of Maryland.

On an exquisite October morning, Max Bloom shows a visitor around his hilly, sun-dappled yard in Pikesville.

First stop is the “poond,” the “ugly, broken swimming pool” that Bloom transformed into an attractive pond complete with fish, Water Lilies and some *Eichhornia crassipes* (Water Hyacinth) soon after moving to the property nearly two decades ago. Nearer the house are Hydrangea, a *Daphne odora* (Winter Daphne), and a Gardenia. Various bulbs and *Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly Weed) are newly planted. It is a pretty, peaceful, secluded setting, and most of its beauty is visible from the house.

Gardening was not Max Bloom’s first love, or his second. In fact, he came to gardening in middle age, rather late for someone who would become president of the Horticultural Society of Maryland (2002-2006).

Born in the east end of London in 1934, Bloom grew up in Hackney, just outside the English capital. His father was from Warsaw, his mother from outside Kiev; both parents were deaf. In early childhood Bloom spoke Yiddish, not English. “I was the only Jew at my school,” he said.

He was one of thousands of school children evacuated from London when the Germans bombed the city during World War II. Many years later, while attending a Baltimore Symphony Orchestra performance, Bloom became filled with anxiety and had trouble breathing. He made it to an exit, he said, then realized the source of his anxiety: the BSO was performing the same Tchaikowsky composition that had blared from loudspeakers at the train station as he was being evacuated.

In his late teens, Bloom joined the Royal Air Force. When RAF officers discovered that Bloom had a professional boxer’s license—courtesy of the boxing club he had belonged to since the age of 9—they made him part of a physical education unit that toured England doing “gymkhana;” exhibitions of acrobatics. One night, he said, he was briefly blinded by searchlights while performing a stunt, lost his footing and fell—hard. He broke his back, he said, but didn’t realize it for months.

Bloom became a physical therapist, working first in England, then in Israel where his older brother lived in a kibbutz. Many of his clients in England had injuries from the war; in Israel, many had been injured by land mines.

At the end of the 1950s, Bloom applied for and received a work-study fellowship at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. He arrived in America with almost no money and had to find a paying job. First came one as a greeter at a jewelry store. Then he joined a singing quartet at Chizuk Amino Congregation, and discovered that it paid. He also became a consultant to a health club and a part-time physical therapist at a senior rehabilitation center.

The Hopkins fellowship was just for one year, but Bloom decided to stay in America when it ended. He established a physical therapy practice in Baltimore and continued to work until a few years ago. He met his wife Carol in Baltimore in the 1960s; they have three sons, a grandchild and a foster daughter.

The Blooms lived for many years in Mount Washington but “15 or 16 years ago” they moved to their present home in Baltimore County. Their attractive, stone-and-wood home is surrounded by tall trees and beautiful shrubs and perennials.

Moving to the present home marked the real stirring of Bloom’s interest in gardening. His close friend, Dr. Norman Highstein, was an enthusiastic and skilled gardener and...
Jean Silber and her husband Sidney spent decades working to create one of the most extraordinary gardens in Maryland.

When it came time last year to “downsize,” Jean Silber did what you might expect from someone whose name is synonymous with generosity in the Baltimore area. She decided to offer plants from her garden for sale to members of the Horticultural Society of Maryland, with the proceeds to benefit the society.

The plant sale—believed to be the first such event in HSM history—“was very, very successful for HSM and for those who made purchases,” said Nancy Raskin, the society’s president.

“The biggest thanks need to go to Jean and [son] Doug Silber who offered this unique and generous opportunity to HSM,” Raskin said.

“To preserve the garden is to share the plants with others,” Jean Silber said.

The Silber garden, in Lutherville, drew hundreds of visitors each year and was featured on the HSM Garden Tour. It comprised a series of named garden “rooms,” three ponds and a vast array of trees—among them Kousa Dogwood, China Fir and two dozen cultivars of Japanese Maple. It had English and American Boxwoods by the dozen, Rhododendron, Hosta, Hellebores, Azaleas and much, much more.

The garden was a labor of love for Jean Silber and her husband, who died in 2013. They were aided by garden design experts such as Wolfgang Oehme and by their longtime gardener, Michael Rosendale.

Rosendale was on hand on the sale days (Sept. 25-27), offering “a wealth of knowledge and assistance,” Raskin said. Also on hand: Gibson Porter of Gibson Landscapes Inc., who oversaw the digging up, balling and transportation of trees and shrubs.

“The sale allowed me to have a little piece of the Silber garden in my garden,” said Kate Blom, who bought a Rhododendron ‘P.J.M.,’ better known as a P.J.M. Azalea.

Blom, supervisor of the Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory, also said the sale gave her an opportunity to spend “quiet time in the lovely spaces Jean and Sidney had created.”

A Singular Act of Generosity
The name Wolfgang Oehme appears in almost every issue of The Hort Report, with good reason. The gardens that Oehme (1930-2011) designed on his own and with James van Sweden (1935-2013), with dramatic plantings of ornamental grasses and perennials, became known as the New American Garden and transformed American landscape architecture.

Those gardens and other projects of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, the Washington, D.C., firm they started in 1975, are celebrated in an exhibit at the National Building Museum in Washington through May 1, 2016.

The exhibit, “The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden,” features “52 contemporary and newly commissioned photographs of important residential, civic and commercial projects,” according to the museum’s web site. It is timed to mark the 25th anniversary of the publication of Bold Romantic Gardens (1990), the book Oehme and van Sweden wrote with Susan Rademacher. Sculpture, paintings, furniture, plans and drawings are also part of the Washington exhibit. The result, the museum says, is “an unprecedented exploration of the broad arc of landscape design, from early inspirations to project execution to the continuous changes that all landscapes undergo over time.”

There are many Oehme and Oehme, van Sweden gardens in the Baltimore area, the Eastern Shore and Washington. Some are public, such as the Towson Courthouse Garden, designed by Oehme in 1988, and the New American and Friendship gardens at the National Arboretum. Some gardens are at businesses and hospitals, such as the East Garden at Sheppard Pratt Hospital. Francis Scott Key Memorial Park is an Oehme design.

Still others are private, such as those of Pauline Vollmer in Murray Hill, Jacqueline Grat in Mount Washington, Karen Ofutt in Upperco and Judy Van Dyke in Chestertown.

A web site dedicated to Wolfgang Oehme, www.wolfgangoehme.com, has pictures of some of his work. The web site of the Oehme, van Sweden firm, www.ovsla.com, has breathtaking photographs of many recent projects, as well as pictures of James van Sweden’s residence on the Eastern Shore.

The National Building Museum, 401 F St. N.W., Washington 20001, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

The museum is free to its members. Admission is $10 for adults and $7 for youth ages 3 to 17, students with identification and seniors ages 60 and older.

You can also find most if not all of the The New American Garden exhibit at The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s “Landslide” microsite. You can find this by going to its general website www.tclf.org.

ABOVE: Wolfgang Oehme (left) and James van Sweden (right) in 1990.
Photo: Volkmar Wentzel, courtesy of The Cultural Landscape Foundation.
LEFT: Oehme van Sweden project, Kendale Farm. Photo: Courtesy of Roger Foley.