



THE HORT REPORT

NEWSLETTER OF THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND, INC. | JANUARY 2019

Beautiful Bark

By Nancy Taylor Robson



In this garden planted for fall interest, Crape Myrtle bark makes a dramatic statement.

In choosing a tree, whether as replacement for a storm-felled soldier or a spot that's crying out for a new addition, rarely do we look for one with great bark. Shade? Yes. Bloom, disease-resistance, shape, fall color? Yep, yep, yep. But bark? Nope. Yet for about five months of the year, what we have for visual appeal, at least among the deciduous denizens, is bark.

"If you expand to include winter bark and form, it gives a larger palette to work with." says Christine Pax, conservation designer at Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely.

Winter reveals the bones of a garden—the sculptural outlines of a landscape. We particularly notice the leafless silhouettes against a winter sunset: the uplifted branches of an American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) or the muscular arms of a American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*). Yet it's the bark—smooth, stippled, striated, painted or peeling—that adds nuanced color and detail to a winter day's minimalism.

The sinewy limbs of Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*), striped in desert hues, have long been a staple for gardeners looking for winter interest. And

Lecture Series

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

Matt Mattus
Rediscovering Forgotten and Heirloom Bulbs

Join plantsman Matt Mattus, host of the popular blog growingwithplants.com, as he shares one of his greatest passions: rare and unusual bulbs. Mattus, known for his visually stunning and entertaining talks, promises to change how we think about summer bulbs. He will also share his secret sources for everything from *Achimenes* (Hot Water Plant) to *Zephyranthes* (Rain Lilies).

Tuesday, APRIL 9, 7:30 p.m.

Carol Gracie
The Natural History of Spring Wildflowers

Besides adding beauty to our woodlands and gardens, native spring wildflowers play an important role in the ecology of our eastern forests. Carol Gracie, author of *Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast: A Natural History*, will show how these plants have adapted to their shaded environment and discuss their methods of propagation and dispersal and their uses as medicines, foods and dyes. Book signing.

Tuesday, MAY 14, 7:30 p.m.

Karl Gercens
Making a Garden Great Again!

Join Longwood horticulturist Karl Gercens as he traverses the globe in search of garden inspiration that works to make any garden great again! We'll look at hardscape that is both functional and beautiful while softening the edges with leaves and flowers that truly pop in any situation. Whether it's wet/dry or sunny/shady, there's a plant for there and you can bet it'll be beautiful with a minimum of effort.

Lectures are held in the Vollmer Center auditorium, Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209. Lectures are free for members and their guests; non-members are \$10 at the door.

For more information, visit our web site: mdhorticulture.org

COMING HSM EVENTS

JANUARY PLANT FORUM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 2019

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Vollmer Center Auditorium

For HSM members only. Free but you must register in advance. Laura Beth Resnick, *Dahlias*; Scott Carbone, *New Hydrangeas*; Kelly Billings, *Water Gardening in Pots*.

WINTER SEMINAR

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2019

8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sheppard Pratt Conference Center

Please join us for the annual winter seminar.

Members: \$105 through Feb. 1; \$125 afterward

Non-members: \$125 through Feb. 1;

\$145 afterward. The registration deadline is Feb. 9.

For more information, see page 7.

28TH ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019

Gardens of north Baltimore. Details to come.

ENGLAND GARDEN TOUR

JULY 1 - JULY 12, 2019

Hampton Court Flower Show and East and Thames Valley Gardens. Includes visits to Chartwell, the home of Sir Winston Churchill; Beth Chatto's garden; Sandringham, the Queen's country home; Great Dixter and Sissinghurst, among others. Co-sponsored by the Society and the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland. Information: Claire Jones, jonesb1@comcast.net or 443-927-6285.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

The Horticultural Society of Maryland will be 50 years old in 2019. Look for details about our exciting anniversary events.

For more information, visit www.mdhorticulture.org



New Lending Library at Cylburn

Are you looking for a good book on gardening? Or are you looking for a good home for books on gardening that you no longer need?



Either way, the new library at Cylburn Arboretum may be just the place. A growing collection of books on horticulture rests on shelves in the Cylburn Greenhouse Classroom, courtesy of the Horticultural Society of Maryland.

"The book shelves at Cylburn are to serve as a learning/lending library," said Peter Bieneman, HSM president. "We have gotten wonderful donations from our members."

The first books came from Jean Silber, around the time of her garden dispersal sale in 2015, said Nancy Raskin, who was then the Society president.

"After that, many other people started to ask if we were interested in their gardening/horticulture books," Raskin said. "Most of the folks were downsizing and no longer had room for them."

Raskin said she mentioned the books to Melissa Grim, chief horticulturist for the Department of Recreation and Parks. "She said that this [library] had been a dream of hers for many years," Raskin said, and proposed the Greenhouse Classroom as a good location.

"The purpose is to allow interested people to borrow any book that they like," Raskin said. Borrowers will be expected to return books when they are finished with them.

The Society paid for the shelves, which were designed and made by Rob Mottek of R&E Cabinetworks Inc., Reisterstown.

Book donations are welcome at the Society's Vollmer Center office.

HSM Board Update

Bill Yonkers, the longtime secretary of the board of the Horticultural Society, has a new title. He is now the secretary-treasurer, taking up the treasurer duties left vacant by the resignation of Diane Owen.

Yonkers, secretary since 2007, has played a leading role in many Society events and causes for more than a decade, including the development of the Vollmer Center and its entrance garden and the Tashiding fundraiser.

Welcome New Members!

Daria Andrejak
Missy Azen
Jennifer Bolster
Marsha Howes

J. Wade Kennedy
Colin & Wanda MacLachlan
Kathleen McElroy
(Green Fields Nursery)

Alice Sturm
Stephen Woods
Sandra Young

Helleborus, Hellebores

By Harry Merritt



If the lack of blooms in winter gets you down, count yourself lucky if you have Hellebores in your garden.

These tough perennial beauties, native to the Balkans and Asia, not only tolerate cold and snow, they bloom in it. I hadn't quite grasped this phenomenon when we planted our Hellebores a decade ago; thus I was startled the first time I saw their pink blooms in the snow.



Helleborus niger, Christmas Rose

The genus *Helleborus*, of the family Ranunculaceae, comprises more than 20 species, many of them evergreen. The best known in America are *Helleborus x hybridus*, or Lenten Rose, which has many varieties in many colors, and *H. niger*, or Christmas

Rose. The common names equate with approximate bloom times; neither plant is a Rose or a relative of a Rose. A charming legend maintains that the first Christmas Rose sprung from the fallen tears of a shepherd who was distraught because he did not have a gift to take to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Many centuries ago, Hellebores were used to treat gout, paralysis and mental illness. This is a little hard to fathom since most Hellebores contain chemicals that can be poisonous if swallowed; poisonous to humans, and, yes, rabbits and deer. Skin contact causes rashes in some cases.

Hellebores thrive in well-drained, neutral soil, enriched with "copious amounts of organic matter," according to White Flower Farm's planting instructions. They grow well in shade and are often considered a shade plant, but they prefer partial sun. Mine flourish in dappled shade beneath the River Birches on the north side of my house, and



Helleborus x hybridus, Lenten Rose

under a Magnolia on the south side. Once established, they can tolerate dry conditions. They do not require much maintenance, perhaps some pruning of dead leaves in early spring before new growth emerges, some water if it's dry for an extended period. They will produce seedlings that can be transplanted if desired. If not, you will have a widening spread of Hellebores, not a bad thing.

Hellebores are not free of problems, however. Aphids, slugs and Black Spot may appear. A virus called Black Death turns Hellebores to blotchy black messes that must be removed and trashed. I have not experienced any of these with my Hellebores. Fingers crossed.

PLANT FACTS: *Helleborus x hybridus*, Lenten Rose

Hardiness: USDA Zones 4 to 9

Family: Ranunculaceae

Culture: Part shade to full shade. Average, moist soil.

Bloom time: Late winter to early spring

Availability: Most nurseries and garden centers sell them.

Note: Perennial Plant Association Plant of the Year, 2005

REFERENCES:

Graham Rice, grahamrice.com

Derrick Stowell, "Plant of the Month, February 2013: Hellebores," University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, ag.tenn.edu

White Flower Farm, whiteflowerfarm.com

Joseph Woodard, hellebores.org

Harry Merritt is editor of THE HORT REPORT.

Beautiful Bark

Continued from page 1



Tatarian Dogwood (*Cornus alba*) has wonderfully bright stems that are particularly striking against snow. But when considering a garden addition, we can think both visually and ecologically, which brings us to trees native to the region.

Some offer understated beauty. Beech, which produces nuts that feed wildlife, boasts beautifully smooth pewter bark that shines like satin in the sun. Its main drawback is size; it's best suited to a large landscape. Instead, Scott Aker, supervisory research horticulturist at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, suggests Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*).

"You can get that beech look in a small tree," he says. "And it's critically important for the Zebra Swallowtail. And the fruits are delicious."

Another potential substitute for Beech is Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*).

"It's not easy to find in the trade, but specialty and native nurseries have it," says Pax. And, in addition to its lovely pewter bark, Yellowwood has a fragrant, white Wisteria-like bloom. "It doesn't bloom every year, but when it blooms, Oh. My. God!" says Pax.

In contrast, Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) has beautifully fissured bark, like the rivulets in a stream. Plus, it produces a fragrant bloom that helps sustain honeybees in mid-summer when many of the nectar-producing trees are finished. The bark of Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*), also known as Juneberry or Shadblow, a beautiful, spreading tree (whose bloom time usually coincides with the spring shad run), is slightly netted, a bit like the skin of a musk melon.

For slightly larger spots, there's Hop Hornbeam, or Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), whose exfoliating bark peels

away in long slim strips of reddish brown, muted orange and gray, making the tree look as though it's wearing a mohair sweater. The fruits look like hops flowers (there's always a reason for common names) and the small nutlets offer winter forage for birds and small mammals.

"It grows very slowly and is a good candidate under utility lines and in tough spots," says Pax. Additionally, because it tolerates full sun to full shade, dry to moist soil and a wide pH range, "it works well in a parking-lot tree island and is drought- and heat-tolerant, which is becoming more and more important."

Among the most dramatic exfoliating trees is Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*), whose bark looks as though a large collection of kindling has stuck itself to the tall, straight trunk.

"And it has huge wildlife value when it produces nuts," Pax says. "It also tolerates clay soils and drought but not flooding."

Native River Birch (*Betula nigra*), once hard to find, now makes a spectacular statement in winter gardens all over the Mid-Atlantic.

"The bark is like no other tree," says Tyler Altenburger, arborist manager at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pa., who grew up with a favorite River Birch in his front yard.

"People think they're not drought tolerant but in fact they are," Pax adds. "They can be planted in very wet areas and can handle oxygen-poor soils but they are also drought-tolerant since they can shed their leaves during times of drought, which makes them look as though they're dying—but they're not. They leaf out again when the water returns—but you still have the lovely bark, which is so dramatic."



LEFT TO RIGHT:

- American Elm, *Ulmus americana*
- Crape Myrtle, *Lagerstroemia*
- American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia*
- Tatarian Dogwood, *Cornus alba*
- Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*
- Yellowwood, *Cladrastis kentukea*
- Sourwood, *Oxydendrum arboreum*
- Serviceberry, *Amelanchiers*
- Hop Hornbeam, Ironwood, *Ostrya virginiana*
- Shagbark Hickory, *Carya ovata*
- River Birch, *Betula nigra*
- American Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*
- Kousa Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*

The majestic American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) one of the largest eastern native trees whose white upper limbs seem to pierce a winter sky, has gorgeous multihued bark that is a standout in winter.

“It has almost a camo-type color,” observes Altenburger. “There are two or three different colors all on the same tree and the older it gets the more interesting the bark is.”

The more-interesting-with-age phenomenon is true of many exfoliating trees (and of many people for that matter). For example, non-native Kousa Dogwood (*Cornus kousa*) has smooth bark in its youth, but gradually develops a mosaic pattern.

“It typically happens as the tree matures,” says Altenburger. “In fact, most trees that have some kind of interesting bark, when they’re younger, they’re gonna look completely different than when they mature.”

While we appreciate bark’s beauty, lurking barely below the surface is another facet of its interest.

“We like bark for its aesthetics, for all the different textures and colors,” says Douglas Tallamy, professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware. “But, there’s also a functional goal to what creates that beauty. For example, some barks are designed to protect trees from fire, like the redwoods in California. Their bark is many inches thick, so the fire blackens the outside, but the tree survives,” he explains. “It’s also true in the Pine Barrens.”

Tallamy says that exfoliating bark like that of River Birch and Sycamore is an adaptation against vines. It can also offer other ecological services. For example, Shagbark Hickory’s bark provides shelter for bats.

“They get up under there during the day,” says Tallamy. And the deep ridges of oak offer both shelter and forage

for a particular species of moth. “There’s a little moth called the Barred White Tineid that eats the fungus that grows in the ridges of oak bark.”

Those additional dimensions expand our appreciation of what at first appears to be skin-deep beauty.

“It’s a different way of thinking about bark,” Tallamy notes.

It’s a more holistic way of thinking about bark and trees; one that may complicate a decision, but that enriches both our landscape and our understanding of it.

SOURCES:

Christine Pax
Annapolis Native Landscape Design
410-757-4690
<https://www.annapolisnativelandscapes.com>

Adkins Arboretum
12612 Eveland Road, Ridgely, MD 21660
410-634-2847
<https://www.adkinsarboretum.org>

Herring Run Nursery
Mount Pleasant Golf Course, 6131 Hillen Road,
Baltimore, MD 21239
<https://www.bluewaterbaltimore.org/herring-run-nursery/>

Douglas W. Tallamy
Bringing Nature Home (Timber Press, 2007)
<https://www.bringingnaturehome.net>

Nancy Taylor Robson, a Master Gardener, is a longtime garden writer and the author of two novels. She lives in Galena on the Eastern Shore.

PHOTO SOURCES: Paula A. Simon and WikiCommons

Vollmer Center Garden Update

By Peter Bieneman

The Horticultural Society of Maryland continues to provide maintenance and management of the Vollmer Center Entrance Garden. The garden at Cylburn Arboretum, fully funded by the support of our members, serves as a welcoming presence to our many events at the center.

The perpetual-care component that was engineered into the establishment of the garden has paid off, providing a horticultural gem of unique plants. John T. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., a former president of the Society who designed the garden, sums up the sentiment. "I am very pleased with the way it has exposed everyone to new plants such as, *Daphne genkwa* and *Spigelia marilandica*."

The garden was installed in the spring of 2014. The maintenance since our last update in 2016 has remained consistent under the direction of Jackson Lehman. He holds a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from Morgan State University and a former gardener for the Cylburn Arboretum Association. For him the biggest challenge has been that this is a public garden. The maintenance beyond watering, pruning and mulching includes picking up trash and repairing damage that is inherent in any public space. "Being a mostly perennial garden, [it] presents a high level of care," he said.

The garden is actually four distinct areas, each presenting its own horticultural challenges and successes. The island bed has proven the most difficult to maintain. It is in full sun, surrounded by paving, close to the road and often subject to damage. Fortunately, the plants selected, including *Ceanothus americanus*, common name New Jersey tea,

D. genkwa (Lilac Daphne) and *Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon', Golden Variegated Sweet Flag, are able to survive the less than ideal conditions.



Viburnum prunifolium

The bed to the right of the center's entrance has developed into a shadier location with the vigorous growth of the standard *Viburnum prunifolium* trees. They provide welcome cool and cover for the building. *Adiantum pedatum* (Northern Maidenhair Fern) thrives in this location, and is as beautifully delicate, whether viewed from inside or outside.

There was a curious visitor to an adjacent bed last summer. Lehman noted holes and uprooted *Stachys officinalis* 'Pink Cotton Candy.' After several hypotheses were disproved, a small group of dedicated volunteers set up a night-vision camera to catch the perpetrator. It turned out to be a red fox, which was caught digging for cicada killers in the early morning hours. The fox has moved on.

Board and Vollmer garden committee member Bill Yonkers oversaw much of the daunting task of installation. "All the effort paid off. [Existing] site conditions were bad, and everything in the world was buried in the beds," he remembers. Gibson Landscapes Inc. was in charge of the site work and according to Fitzpatrick, "took lots of subsoil off site." This intense bed preparation made room for more than

100 yards of a specially blended mixture of topsoil, sand, fine pine and compost. The emphasis was on good drainage; coarse sand comprised 60 percent of the mixture.

Like any good garden, proper site preparation and long-term maintenance have been the components of success. "It proved itself to be a lovely, well-maintained space with great plants and variety," adds Pat Sherman, a Society board member and head gardener for the arboretum association.

The future of this garden includes adding more bulbs such as *Sternbergia lutea* (Winter Daffodil) and selecting either *Adiantum venustum* (Evergreen Maidenhair Fern) or *Isotoma axillaris* (Laurentia) to replace the *Cyclamen hederifolium* that is struggling with wet feet. Fitzpatrick has pointed out maintenance issues, including thinning the *V. prunifolium* and addressing the runoff problems.



Franklinia alatamaha

A *Franklinia alatamaha* was donated by John Gregg and planted last summer. It had replaced a × *Gordlinia grandiflora* that replaced an *Elliottia racemosa*. As you can now see, the garden is not free of its challenges. Yet collectively, all those involved in its creation and continuing care agree that is what makes it so appealing.

Peter Bieneman, general manager of Green Fields Nursery, is president of the Society.

Perennially Inspired!

A DAY-LONG WINTER SEMINAR WITH FIVE HORTICULTURE EXPERTS

Saturday, February 16, 2019



NIGEL DUNNETT, Professor of Planting Design, Urban Horticulture and Vegetation Technology at England’s University of Sheffield, is described as “a pioneer of the new ecological approach to planting gardens and public spaces.”

CHING-FANG CHEN, project manager and landscape architect for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, is “reinventing the public park” as she redesigns Little Bennett Regional Park near Clarksburg, Maryland.

NICK MCCULLOUGH, plantsman and owner of a landscape and nursery company in Johnstown, Ohio, is a former PPA Young Professional of the Year with a forward-thinking garden design blog, thinkingoutsidetheboxwood.com.

DEAN DIETRICH is a horticulturist at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. His gardening background includes work at Chanticleer, Filoli and Longwood Gardens.

DAVE MATTERN, assistant horticulturist at Chanticleer, is a graduate of Longwood Gardens’ professional gardener training program, and has worked at Dallas Arboretum and Botanic Garden and West Dean Gardens in West Sussex, England.

The Conference Center at Sheppard Pratt, 6501 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21204

Registration/coffee: 8:00 am • Welcome remarks: 8:45 am • Program: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

BABIKOW SINCE 1875



To learn more about the seminar and the speakers, visit the Winter Seminar page at:

www.mdhorticulture.org



REGISTRATION: Mail this form with your check or register online with your credit card at www.mdhorticulture.org

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Names of additional attendees: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: Horticultural Society of Maryland, Inc.

MAIL TO: Horticultural Society of Maryland, PO Box 4213, Lutherville, MD 21094

Registration fee includes lunch and refreshment breaks. Cancellations: Refunds will be made, less a 20% processing fee, if cancelled before January 30, 2019. No refunds after that date.

QUESTIONS? Visit our website, call 410-821-5561 or email winterseminar@mdhorticulture.org

REGISTRATION FEES:

Current HSM Members:

_____ \$105, if purchased by Feb 1

_____ \$125, if purchased after Feb 1

Non-HSM Members:

_____ \$125, if purchased by Feb 1

_____ \$145, if purchased after Feb 1

Deadline for registration is February 9; no tickets will be available at the door.

Smithsonian Gardens Trip

Janet Draper, horticulturist at the Smithsonian Institution's Mary Livingston Ripley Garden, led a tour of Smithsonian gardens for members of the Society in mid-September.



Above: Matt Millage, of the Smithsonian's Enid A. Haupt Garden, gestures to the distinctive entrance to the Moongate Garden.



Top right, center: Kate Blom and Janet Draper with Crystal Wilkinson and Leigh Barnes.

Bottom right: *Mussaenda frondosa*, commonly known as the Dhobi Tree. It can be seen throughout the Smithsonian gardens and grows wild in India and other East Asian countries.

Below: Millage describes the care needed for success with the epiphytic plant *Medinilla magnifica*, or Showy Medinilla, a tropical evergreen native to the Philippines. Nancy Grabowski snaps a close-up shot.

PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS: Catherine Cook



OFFICERS

Peter Bieneman, *President*
Paula A. Simon, *Vice President for Programs*
Christy Fairman, *Vice President for Membership*
Bill Yonkers, *Secretary / Treasurer*

BOARD MEMBERS

Helene Clapperton
Catherine Cook
Jennifer Forrence
Nancy Raskin
Pat Sherman
Mary Jo Sherrod
Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff
Marilyn Vantosh

HONORARY MEMBERS

Leigh Barnes
Max Bloom
Muffin Dell
John T. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Bridget Maginn
Pauline Vollmer
Rose Wolford

NEWSLETTER

Harry Merritt, *Editor*
Paula A. Simon, *Designer*

VOLLMER CENTER GARDEN

Peter Bieneman, *Manager*
Jackson Lehman, *Gardener*

MEMBERSHIP

For information about membership or to join, visit the society's website: www.mdhorticulture.org or telephone Christy Fairman at 410-821-5561.

Benefits of Membership

Newsletters and membership directory; admission to the spring and fall lectures and the annual garden tour; and discounts on workshops, trips and special events.

© THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND, INC.

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 4213
Lutherville, MD 21093-4214

Telephone: 410-821-5561

www.mdhorticulture.org

The Horticultural Society of Maryland, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) educational organization.