



Ilex opaca 'Satyr Hill'

Far Barn Preservation Project Begins

Our grand old Far Barn elicits a multitude of emotions. It's impossible to imagine the Arboretum without this iconic rural structure; American flag flying overhead in the breeze. Though difficult to capture the feeling with mere words, perhaps the word beloved says it best.

The Far Barn and the adjacent grounds have hosted numerous Arboretum events that speak to the heart of PHA including sharing knowledge through lectures and workshops and extending appreciation to volunteers and supporters. Saving this soulful old building for future generations also speaks to one of Polly Hill's original goals, preserving the harmony between the agricultural history of the site and the living landscape that supports our collections.

In an effort to prevent the further deterioration of the Far Barn we undertook a full-scale structural review of the building. Recommendations were submitted and funding obtained. Work has already begun on the restoration. With this opportunity to improve the safety and utility of the structures we will make improvements to lighting, sound, and access both to the Far Barn and the adjacent Slaughterhouse. We expect to be ready to greet visitors, workshop participants, and new admirers by next spring.

An important part of the process is shoring up the foundation that supports the entire framework of the building. As we build from the foundation up, the sagging floor will be replaced and the walls will

be straightened. A new roof will top it all off! As a result of this intensive effort a few plants will inevitably have to be removed. With their loss comes opportunity. We will plant new plants, something we thoroughly enjoy doing.

We have had the good fortune of working with local experts on the structural and historical reviews. The dedication of PHA Education & Outreach Administrator Karin Stanley has been instrumental. We are very pleased to have the talents of Tucker Hubbell and Ben Clark of Rising Sun Construction on this sensitive renovation. We look forward to welcoming you next summer to our beloved, and recently restored, Far Barn.

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The Polly Hill Arboretum

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The mission of the Polly Hill Arboretum is to perpetuate the experimental tradition in horticulture established by Polly Hill by sharing knowledge of plants and scientific procedure through educational programs, research, plant conservation, and exploration. The Arboretum seeks to preserve its meadows and woodlands, to promote an understanding of its collections, and to encourage their utilization for scholarship, observation, and the enjoyment of all.

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The crowd looks up on PHA's Edgartown tree tour led by Tom Clark.

Message from the Director

This summer PHA took its mission outside our stone walls to better serve the Island community. To begin, Harvard Forest director and PHA research associate Dr. David Foster addressed a large audience at the Ag Hall in West Tisbury to lead off our annual lecture series. Foster outlined the challenges and opportunities in protecting New England forests with a special emphasis on Martha's Vineyard. He stressed the important role the Arboretum plays through engaging in the long-term study of our woodlands and sharing our findings with the larger community.

Many off-site walks explored Island cultural landscapes and natural areas. Tom Clark's Edgartown tree tour elicited such an eager response we offered two additional tours! An exploration walk at Eastville Beach in Vineyard Haven surveyed the diversity of plants and animals found along the seashore. An examination of the native plants of Chappaquiddick including the bog plants at Brine's Pond drew an enthusiastic group. And this autumn, a walk in the State Forest coinciding with the peak flowering of many native wildflowers generated a crowd. Given the success of these walks we promise to offer more next season.

We continued our surveys of aquatic plants in Vineyard freshwater ponds. An Edey Foundation grant partially funded a botanical inventory of the Mill Pond in West Tisbury. And we had a rare opportunity to travel to neighboring Naushon Island and survey its freshwater ponds as part of our continuing work compiling *The Flora of Dukes County*.

The close of a busy season included a workshop on native goldenrods. Conservation professionals and PHA members and staff attended this class as well as community members. The Cowbarn provided a cozy learning environment where botanical beginners studied alongside seasoned naturalists. All the above activities support our mission of sharing knowledge of plants through educational programs, research, plant conservation, and exploration.

The Polly Hill Arboretum is rooted in our community. But we are only able to share our knowledge through the generosity and support of our members and donors. If you believe in our good work, please reach outside our walls. Introduce others to PHA. We have so much to offer!

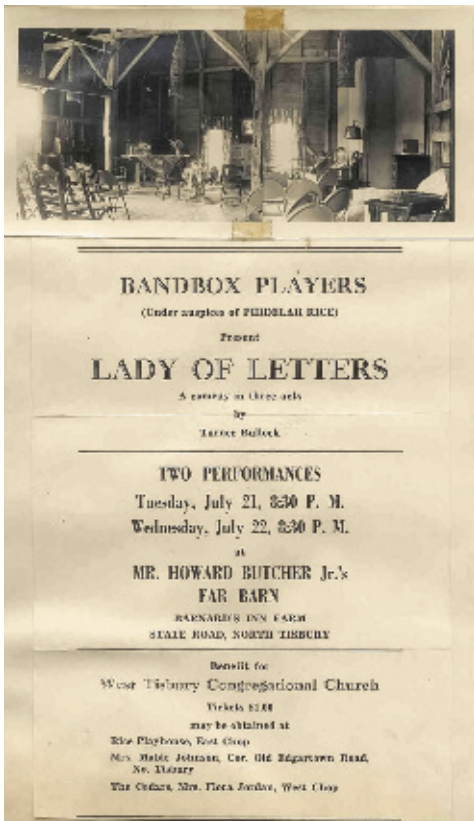
Timothy M. Boland

The Far Barn

The Far Barn is the most recognizable building at PHA. The simple charm of the old barn set between open fields and stone walls evokes memories of days gone by. It is here in the open, airy space, shared by our resident barn swallows, that we host our evening lectures. All sorts of workshops, classes, school programs, and special events take place here as well. The Far Barn is central to the Arboretum both physically and programmatically. As we look ahead to preserve and protect the Far Barn we also look back at how this old barn came to evoke such deep feelings.

Ever since Polly's parents, Howard and Margaret Butcher, purchased the farm in 1926 the old sheep barn has been a center of activity. At that time the Cowbarn, Polly's future summer residence, was still literally a barn. Guests would stay in the Homestead with the Butchers while the younger set would bunk in the hayloft of the sheep barn—the barn farthest from the Homestead, hence the name: Far Barn.

By the 1930s and 40s an active summer community was forming in West



Playbill for the Bandbox Players performing at Mr. Howard Butcher Jr.'s Far Barn



Happy results from Sue Silva's flower arranging class held last summer in the Far Barn

Tisbury. Barnard's Inn Farm became a social center hosting many guests and frequent entertainments. The Far Barn served as a "family room" and the adjacent Slaughterhouse outfitted as "the best guest room" on the farm. In 1940 Mrs. Butcher had the nearby fireplace constructed to augment her parties. Theatrical performances were held in the Far Barn to benefit the West Tisbury Congregational Church. One summer the Bandbox Players presented a three-act comedy, *Lady of Letters*. Tickets sold for \$1.00 and were available at the Rice Playhouse in East Chop, The Cedars in West Chop, and from Mrs. Mable Johnson of North Tisbury.

After Polly and Julian inherited the farm they continued to use the Far Barn and Slaughterhouse as extra living space. Children still climbed the ladder to sleep in the hayloft and the Slaughterhouse still housed guests. Rick Lewandowski, a recent speaker, recalled staying in the Slaughterhouse when visiting Polly in 1983. Many summers Polly and Julian hosted the annual Vineyard Conservation Society meeting with a gala party at the Far Barn. Special gatherings for visiting plant societies and garden groups were held there as well—something we continue to this day.

Of course the Far Barn was once a working barn. Last fall Ann Beha Architects and the consulting firm of Structures North conducted a structural assessment. Although no documented building date is known, framing techniques indicate two periods of construction. Their findings show that "scribe rule" construction, including splayed posts in the two southernmost bays, indicates initial construction in the 18th century, while "square rule" construction in the northern bay indicates a later addition to the barn, most likely during the sheep farm era (ca. 1860 to 1920).

Our consultants found the Far Barn significant in preserving the story of how changes in building techniques reflect changes in the cultural landscape and recommended structural repairs that would respect this history. We are happy to report that thanks to a generous donor these repairs are underway. With the exception of upgrades to the lighting and the installation of a sound system, the Far Barn will fundamentally remain the same. Next summer's programs will once again take place in this familiar and magical space. We expect the barn swallows will be pleased!

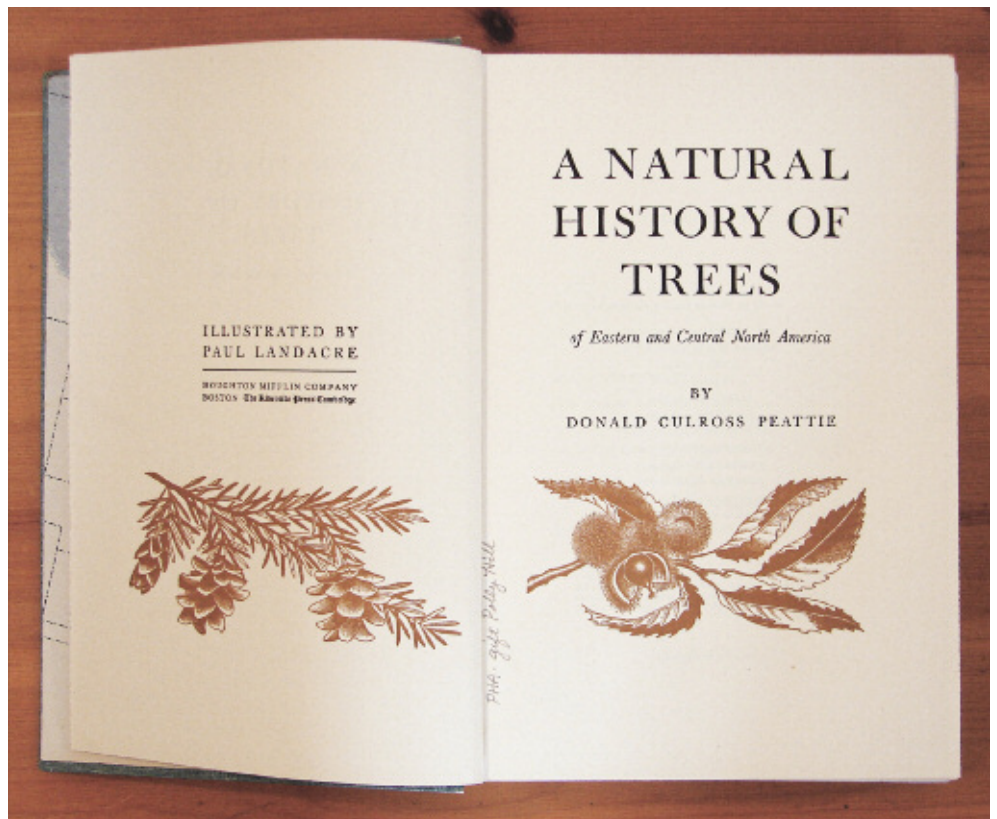
From the Spongberg Library

A staff favorite from the Arboretum's Spongberg Library is a book titled *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* by Donald C. Peattie. This 1950 volume from Polly's personal book collection is illustrated throughout with wonderful wood engravings by noted printmaker Paul Landacre.

Peattie writes poetically about trees including their life histories, uses, and legends. Each tree species takes on a character of its own, playing a role in the history and natural history of its native habitat. Peattie has given our trees a voice. He writes in the foreword:

"Wherever you live, wherever you tramp or travel, the trees of our country are wondrously companionable, if you have a speaking acquaintance with them. When you have learned their names, they say them back to you, as you encounter them—and very much more, for they speak of your own past experience among them, and of our nation's forest life."

Our library includes Polly Hill's books and former Executive Director Steve Spongberg's donation of books and journals. To peruse this book or others in our collection, call to schedule a library appointment.



One of hundreds of books available for reference to members

Wish List: Preserving Memories of Barnard's Inn Farm

In past issues of *Meristems* we have included an article illustrating the history of the Arboretum property. We have featured the Gym, the Cowbarn, the



Julian Hill and his namesake tree from the 1982 guestbook

Nursery, and in this issue, the Far Barn. Much of the information to write these historical pieces comes from the Butcher/Hill family guestbooks.

The five guestbooks, spanning from the 1920s through the late 1990s, are a priceless record of the activities at Barnard's Inn Farm. The albums contain photos, cards, poems and drawings from guests, newspaper clippings, and general musings on daily life on the farm. They record the memories of Polly's family, the comings and goings of visitors, and the history of the West Tisbury summer community. Along with providing a snapshot of the past, they also document changes in the landscape.

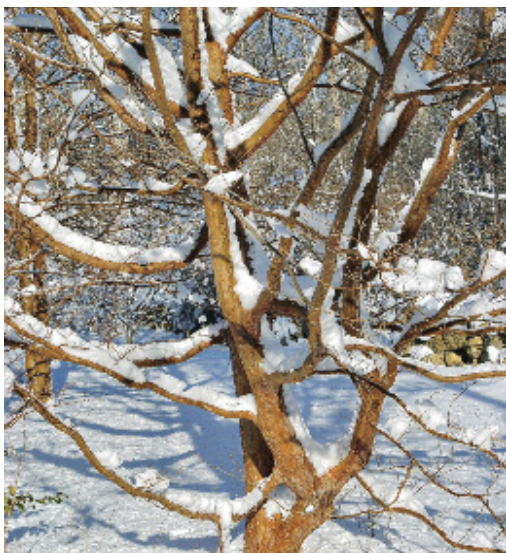
The best way to preserve the information contained in the guestbooks is to convert the pages into digital images. The books are currently in the possession of Polly's son Joseph Hill. He reports they are in need of preservation.

We hope to work with the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia to restore and digitize the guestbooks. They have estimated the work at \$8,000–\$10,000. We are looking for a few interested people to donate a one-time gift restricted to this project. If you would like to help us preserve these historical albums, please call Karin at 508-693-9426.

Winter Walks

“Winter pares everything down. Sunlight is pallid. The color palette is subdued, though nevertheless thrilling. Winter stillness seems quieter ... Distractions of flower and foliage are fewer. All of which sharpens the senses.” These words record the impressions of *MV Times* garden writer Abigail Higgins after a winter walk at the Polly Hill Arboretum.

Our series of guided winter walks were so successful we are offering them again this year. Like the expression “less is more” our winter landscape is beautiful for its simplicity. Join us on Saturdays throughout the winter to tour the Arboretum. Walks are scheduled for December 4, January 8, February 12, and March 12. Our winter rambles start at 10am and run for about an hour. Meet at the Visitor Center and dress for the weather. Free to all.



Stewartia bark provides winter interest.



An inviting path beckons at Mt. Cuba Center near Greenville, Delaware.

Delaware Valley Garden Tour

The Delaware Valley, a region encompassing both Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Wilmington, Delaware, contains wonderful arboreta, historic landscapes, and public gardens that combine history, garden design, and up-to-the-minute horticulture. Greater Philadelphia is where the nation's first botanic garden was planted and today claims to have the highest concentration of public gardens in the USA. The long tradition of gardening and horticulture has made this part of the country a must-see for garden lovers.

Polly Hill's interest and love of plants was nurtured in the Delaware Valley. She grew up outside Philadelphia and later raised her family in Wilmington, Delaware. Polly volunteered at Winterthur Gardens and studied at Longwood Gardens. Our Executive Director Tim Boland began his professional career in the public gardens of the Delaware Valley at the Scott Arboretum (where he met his wife, Laura Coit) and later

worked at Chanticleer Garden in Wayne, Pennsylvania. The Arboretum maintains a working affiliation with Mt. Cuba Center in northern Delaware. The Arboretum's connection to the gardens and gardeners of the Delaware Valley remains strong.

In honor of this connection we are pleased to announce an incredible opportunity—a spring garden tour of the Delaware Valley! Join PHA Executive Director Tim Boland and Education & Outreach Administrator Karin Stanley from May 16–19 to visit the gardens of the Delaware Valley including Winterthur, the Scott Arboretum, Chanticleer, and Mt. Cuba Center, as well as several private gardens. Our tour package includes accommodations at the extraordinary Wayne Hotel in Wayne, Pennsylvania, as well as all garden tours, lunch daily, and one special dinner.

Don't miss this opportunity to tour the country's most fabulous gardens. For a virtual tour of these gardens visit our website's *What's Happening* page. Call Karin for more information at 508-693-9426.

Facebook Photo Contest

This past summer the Arboretum expanded our Internet presence with a Facebook page. Facebook, a social media network, offers a forum to share our story and engage new audiences. Summer intern Kelly Jarvis helped create and edit our page, and in July initiated our first-ever photo contest.

Participants were asked to submit a photo showing a personal view of the Arboretum. Photos were judged on clarity, composition, and subject. Our first place

winner (pictured here) was Janice Haynes for her photo, *Low to the ground in Polly's Play Pen*. We appreciated the color and composition in this close-up of crocus, shortia, and clubmoss taken on a spring day in the Play Pen. And, we loved that one of our plant labels was included!

Our second place photo was submitted by Linda Peterson and third place by John Hanson. Many thanks to all who entered photos. These and many more photos can



be viewed through our Facebook page.

Facebookers, please visit and “like” our Facebook page (listed as *Polly-Hill Arboretum*) and share your photos and thoughts.

Fond Farewell to Justin

“Horticulture is my passion,” wrote Justin Free in his application and it would be impossible to more concisely and accurately describe this young man’s connection with plants. Enthusiastic, curious, talented: words that readily come to mind when reflecting on Justin and the productive nine months he spent as PHA’s collections management intern.

Justin arrived with a solid background as an arborist and horticulturist, but still found much to learn at PHA. When asked how he benefited from his internship, he replied, “First and foremost is the exposure to so many new and different plants.” It’s difficult to pin him down to a favorite—rhododendrons, stewartias, pieris, magnolias, and a wealth of eastern North American natives make his long shortlist.

Reflecting on his internship experience he said he most looks forward to seeing the results of the curatorial work in the Play Pen. The project involved working with Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark to complete an inventory, assess every plant, and reconcile the information with our plant records. This essential first step is the foundation of a Play Pen revitalization plan and has led to the removal of more than a few plants. Justin enjoyed



Justin Free

learning about the curatorial process behind determining which plants remain and which are deaccessioned.

Looking back on Justin’s time at PHA Tom comments, “Justin has been a tremendous asset in so many regards. He possesses a rare combination of knowledge, skill, and experience and he combines it with a refreshing positive attitude—a willingness to jump in and help, whatever the task.” Tom also appreciated his sincere love of plants and his eagerness to share his knowledge with volunteers, visitors, and staff.

What’s next for Justin? After PHA he’ll be rejoining his wife, Ashley,

in Georgia where she recently enrolled in a master’s program at the University of Georgia. Justin positively glows at the prospect of immersing himself in one of the richest temperate floras in the world. A long-term aspiration, however, is the establishment of his own arboretum in his native Ontario where 150 acres of family land awaits. He comments, “Polly’s story is inspirational . . . She was 50 when she started and I’m only 27! I have a great deal of hope I’ll attain my goal.” At PHA we have confidence Justin will succeed in any horticultural endeavor he undertakes.

Board News

At our July Board of Directors meeting we bade a fond farewell to outgoing Board Chairman Robert Doran. From the very beginning and through the transition from private garden to a public arboretum Bob capably led our organization with an insistence on quality enduring growth. While Bob has stepped down from the board he promises to stay involved in the years ahead. Bob and his wife, Happy, will continue to support our growth. Many, many thanks to Bob. We will miss Bob and his leadership.

We also thank Herbert (Bill) Lucas who also stepped down from the Board, a position he held since 2001. Bill and his wife, Ann, summer in West Chop. We

look forward to their continued seasonal visits.

Finally we are very pleased to announce that Board member Joan Smith will fill the role as Board Chairman. Joan has also been a longtime member of the Board, serving since 1999. As the wife of the late Dr. David H. Smith, an original founder of PHA, she has been involved with our organization from the outset. Joan has been a critical part of our success over the last dozen years, and has great admiration for the programs and people that make the Arboretum such a special place. Her understanding of our foundation and Polly’s legacy makes her the ideal leader for our next phase of institutional growth.

Old Mill Pond Inventory

This past spring the Arboretum received an Edey Foundation grant to perform a botanical inventory of the Old Mill Pond in West Tisbury. Research associate Melissa Cullina and PHA staff made several visits to the site recording the diversity of aquatic and shoreline vegetation. Additionally we conducted surveys of the upstream ponds that flow into Old Mill Pond including Priester’s Pond, Crocker Pond, and Fischer Pond. The final report will be submitted next spring. We thank the Edey Foundation for their support of this important study.

Summer Interns

After our initial confusion between their first names, our summer interns Kelly Jarvis and Keely McDonald quickly became distinct and familiar faces, each making a unique contribution to the Arboretum while gaining practical horticultural experience.

Kelly Jarvis, a Rhode Islander, felt at home in our climate and was pleased to learn more woody plants well suited to coastal gardens. From learning to operate equipment and pruning trees to working with the public and attending lectures, Kelly was busy learning all summer. She particularly enjoyed the weekly plant walks with Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark. We have Kelly to thank for creating our new Facebook page; it was her summer project. Kelly has returned to Rhode Island to work in landscaping. She looks forward to traveling and intends to start her own landscape design business.

Keely McDonald enjoyed her summer

learning about plants uncommon to her home state of Colorado. One task was a weekly evaluation of our stewartia collection—she had never even heard of stewartia! Keely believes public gardens play an important role in educating people about the benefits of plants. Her summer project focused on identifying medicinal uses of plants in our collection. The result is an extensive list that will be available in our library. Keely returned to Colorado State to finish her senior year in the landscape horticulture program. Future plans include designing gardens that integrate edible and medicinal plants into traditional landscape plantings.

Once again we have benefited from the energy and enthusiasm of our student interns. We are grateful to the Feldman Family Foundation for their continued support of our summer internship program.

PHA summer internship sponsor Sam Feldman with his daughter, Dene, and grandson, Nathaniel, and PHA interns (left to right) Keely MacDonald, Justin Free, and Kelly Jarvis.



Staff News

This spring Executive Director Tim Boland gave two talks at Native Plants in the Landscape, an annual conference held in Millersville, Pennsylvania. He presented PHA's innovative MV Wildtype program to a national audience along with a talk on our native stewartia project. In July Tim presented "Seeing the Forest Through our Trees" at the annual Woody Plant Conference held at the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College. The talk reviewed our collaboration with Harvard Forest. Both Tim and Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark continue to give local lectures engaging audiences with information on our programs and activities.

In June Education & Outreach Administrator Karin Stanley attended the American Public Gardens Association (APGA) conference in Atlanta. A major focus of the conference was promoting institutional advancement as well as marketing the garden for the future. She was particularly interested in sessions on conservation education and membership retention.

In May, Tom assumed the position of northeast regional organizer for the North American Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC). Tom will coordinate the activities of three regional recruiters. NAPCC is a network of botanical gardens and arboreta that coordinates a continent-wide approach to plant preservation and promotes high standards of plant collections management.

This October Suzy Zell attended the annual regional meeting of the International Plant Propagator's Society held in Warwick, Rhode Island. The three-day meeting was packed with tours to innovative nurseries as well as lectures on a range of topics relevant to plant propagation and nursery/greenhouse management.

Also in October, Justin Free attended a three-day APGA collections management symposium in Denver, Colorado. This opportunity enhanced Justin's internship allowing him to network with public garden professionals from around the country and attend presentations on a range of issues relevant to collections management.

In Love with *Lyonia* by Justin Free

Late last fall in a forest in central Massachusetts, frost covering the frozen ground, I made my way down a steep embankment dense with aspen. Suddenly I was stopped in my tracks . . . not by an imposing presence like a bear, but by an arresting shrub standing gracefully in the open. It possessed stunning exfoliating bark and chestnut brown fruit capsules accentuated by the scrim of frost. Quite frankly I fell in love at first sight with what I'd later identify as *Lyonia ligustrina*, commonly called maleberry.

This Martha's Vineyard native, sometimes referred to as the he-huckleberry and the male-blueberry, has an impressive range extending from Quebec south to Florida and west to Tennessee and Texas.

Maleberry is often found in open places with moist soil. A multi-stemmed shrub, maleberry may reach 12' tall but often reaches between 5' and 8' in height. The habit is irregular and wide spreading and the medium green leaves are held in an alternate arrangement. It is notable from May to July for its panicles of creamy white flowers and throughout the winter for its lovely clusters of 5-cleft seedpods. The older bark has a beautifully mottled, stringy appearance while the previous year's stems take on a glabrous reddish hue; when contrasted with the light green, often downy, new shoots in the spring, the effect is particularly striking.

Lyonia is in the Ericaceae, an immense plant family that also includes rhododen-

drons, mountain laurels, blueberries, pieris, and *Oxydendron* (sourwood). The genus includes approximately 35 species of evergreen to deciduous shrubs (rarely small trees) known for their attractive white or pinkish flowers, dense foliage, and notable bark. The species are distributed throughout Asia, the Caribbean, and Eastern North America. An abundance of species occur in the West Indies. Five species are native to the United States, seven, if you include Puerto Rico; of those species only the geographical range of *Lyonia ligustrina* extends this far north.

The genus *Lyonia* was named by English botanist Thomas Nuttall to commemorate the life of Scottish botanist John Lyon (1765–1814). Nuttall held Lyon

Brilliant fall foliage of maleberry, *Lyonia ligustrina*





Ripening seed capsules of *Lyonia* provide winter interest.

in high regard as a tireless collector of North American plants. (Most were from the southern Appalachians.) The specific epithet *ligustrina* refers to the plant's resemblance to privet (*Ligustrum*).

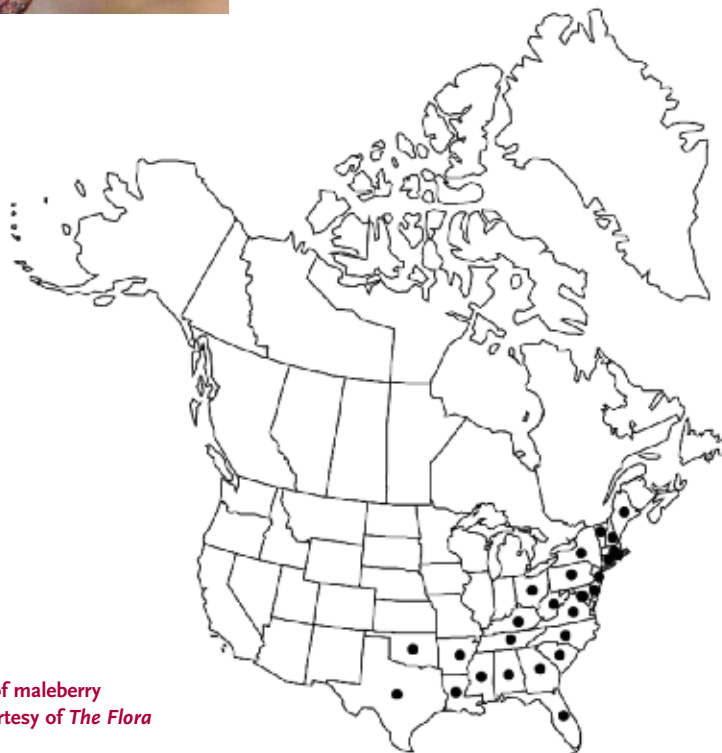
At the Arboretum fantastic specimens of the maleberry can be found here and there along the woodland paths behind the West Field. Look closely. It's tucked among highbush blueberries and the similar habit can be deceiving. The distinctive fruit capsules are a distinguishing ID characteristic.

My first encounter with *Lyonia* stopped me in my tracks figuratively, but the plant has the potential to do so literally. Leaves and nectar from the flowers are very poisonous—if ingested they may be the last leaves you eat! Andromedotoxin, the

toxic compound found within, is known for causing a range of symptoms from vomiting, sweating, and headaches, to abdominal pain, convulsions, and paralysis. Consequently, maleberry is not an appropriate choice for home landscapes frequented by small children.

Maleberry (USDA Zones 4–9) is well suited to many areas on the Island. It prefers full sun. It also prefers moist, sandy loams with an acidic pH. There is certainly no shortage of that on Martha's Vineyard! The root system of this species is tough, and once established it requires little supplemental watering.

I believe there is great potential in this beautiful native shrub. Now I'll admit to a certain starry-eyed partiality, but the fantastic bark and flowers, showy persistent fruit, and graceful habit, all add up to make this native Island plant a wonderful selection for the garden. The maleberry is tough, drought-tolerant, and well adapted to our sandy, acidic soils. It has my two green thumbs up!



Natural distribution range of maleberry in North America. Map courtesy of *The Flora of North America*

Nutmeg-yew: Island Success Story by Tom Clark

Partially obscuring a secluded glade outside the middle gate of the Play Pen grows a splendid specimen of the Japanese nutmeg-yew (*Torreya nucifera*). Not far away stands a close relative, the California-nutmeg (*Torreya californica*). Neither is commonplace in garden landscapes, but as with so many plants at the Polly Hill Arboretum, *Torreya* is an overlooked gem deserving of more attention.

At once recognizable as a conifer, a mature Japanese nutmeg-yew resembles an impressive specimen of yew. *Torreya* is, indeed, in the yew family (Taxaceae), the same family as those “yewbiquitous” landscape shrubs, and has many similar characteristics. Nutmeg-yews (*Torreya*) are distinguished from yews (*Taxus*) in having

stiff needles that come to a sharp point and larger seeds enclosed by a fleshy greenish-brown aril. *Torreya*s are also superficially similar to the plum-yews (*Cephalotaxus*), an Asian genus also represented in PHA’s living collection.

Out of a total of 67 coniferous genera scattered across the globe, *Torreya* is one of 25 represented at the Arboretum. A concentration of these can be found in the Conifer Rows that Polly planted strategically, both to shelter the Play Pen and her treasures within and to assess which conifers might be suitable for use as a windbreak on Martha’s Vineyard. Japanese nutmeg-yew is a success story. I would add it without hesitation to my top 10 list of conifers for the Island.

Japanese nutmeg-yew first came to the Arboretum in 1960 when Polly received three seedlings. Two of the three are now gorgeous full plants. The thriving specimen in the Conifer Rows is densely branched and visually impenetrable owing to its position in full sun and exposure to northerly winds. The fine specimen in the Arboretum Center is equally healthy though slightly different in habit; it has a more open and looser architecture due to its partially shaded and sheltered location.

Conifers are understated; they rely on lustrous foliage and evergreen presence for their garden value. Japanese nutmeg-yew adds a textural element to mixed plantings and can serve as a windbreak and screen. One of the most appealing features is the varied stem color that changes with maturity. One- and two-year-old stems are pale green; three-year-old stems take on a warm cinnamon tone; and by the fourth year develop a rich reddish-brown reminiscent of fine leather. Flanked by the contrasting lustrous, deep green, sickle-shaped needles the effect is subtle beauty.

The genus *Torreya* has a disjunct distribution with four representative species in Asia and two in North America. Three species are naturally occurring in China and the Florida panhandle is home (for the time being) to Florida torrey (*Torreya taxifolia*) perhaps North America’s most critically endangered conifer. The genus commemorates American botanist John Torrey (1796–1873) who described abundant stands of Florida torrey in 1838.

A native of Japan and the South Korean island of Cheju-do, Japanese nutmeg-yew is rare in the wild and when present typically occurs in small groves or as individual plants in lowland temperate forests. Imagine the thrill we experienced on the first field day of our 2007 Japan expedition—a gorgeous September morning—as we traced our way up a winding mountain road in central Honshu when a team member spotted a magnificent 40-footer out the left window. Stop! *Torreya nucifera*!! We exited the vehicle, gathered the seed within reach, and assigned it field collection No. 1; a fitting start to a very successful trip.



Shiny foliage and attractive stems of Japanese nutmeg-yew

Prentice Bowsher

Prentice Bowsher can prune and saw with the best. And he loves the opportunity to see results. Volunteering at the Polly Hill Arboretum offers him a chance to do both. Prentice began as a grounds volunteer in 2007. After completing a Master Gardener program through University of Maryland Extension that included a volunteer work requirement, Prentice felt ready to broaden his volunteering into his Vineyard summer. Initially he was looking for a way to keep his hands in the dirt; instead he embarked on a remarkable experience.

His weekly work with other PHA grounds volunteers has developed into an enjoyable routine that extends outside the Arboretum's stone walls. A core group of volunteers, including Jack Cushman and Gary Montrowl, work together every week at the Arboretum and now also get together for dinner, fishing excursions, and picnics. He appreciates the personal connections and, dare we say, the groundedness. He also enjoys working in an arboretum where there is such a variety of trees. The dramatic copper beech and weeping beech are two of his favorites.

In addition to the camaraderie with his co-volunteers, Prentice enjoys seeing the immediate impact of his work. He calls it "polishing"—making what is already good to begin with even better. He understands the critical importance of grounds work: the weeding and routine chores that make Polly's remarkable achievement shine. He knows if you turn your back on a landscape, invasive plants like bittersweet will take over. Prentice isn't about to allow the bittersweet to win.

After learning more about PHA,



Prentice Bowsher enjoying the fruit of his labors in the Play Pen

Prentice wanted to assist in other ways as well. With a background in editing and writing, and extensive experience in low-income community-based development focusing on planning and leadership, he proffered other skills beyond talent with a pruning saw. During the winter of 2009 he worked with staff and board members on the mid-point assessment of our strategic plan.

Prentice was pleased to assist with administrative work and to continue as a grounds volunteer. And he is favorably impressed with our volunteer program. He knows that to attract and retain a core group of volunteers it takes something special and he feels we do this across the board with all our volunteers—grounds, Visitor Center, school group guides, and tour docents.

He is right about that. We tap into the special skills and interests of individuals and the low turn-over rate among our dedicated volunteers attests to our success. We depend on volunteers. They make the Arboretum sparkle and have fun doing it. For more information about becoming a volunteer, contact Nancy at 508-693-9426.



Torreya nucifera thrives in the Conifer Rows.

A few days later we collected seed of the variety *radicans* in the deep shade of a dense broadleaf woodland among Japanese camellia, maples, and wingnut (*Pterocarya rhoifolia*). A three-year old seedling of this plant, bursting with potential, is now growing in the Arboretum's shadehouse. Perhaps in 50 years a future PHA staff member will admire an attractive specimen in the living collection and write of yet another Arboretum success story.

Top 10 List: Conifers for Martha's Vineyard

Abies nordmanniana
Nordmann Fir

Cryptomeria japonica
Japanese-cedar

Picea orientalis
Oriental Spruce

Thujaopsis dolabrata
Hiba-arborvitae

Cephalotaxus harringtonia
Japanese Plum-yew

Metasequoia glyptostroboides
Dawn-redwood

Sciadopitys verticillata
Umbrella-pine

Torreya nucifera
Japanese Nutmeg-yew

Chamaecyparis obtusa
Hinoki False-cypress

Thuja plicata
Western Red-cedar

On Saturday, April 9, 10 am, we will offer a "Best of Conifers" tour at the Arboretum. Watch for other "Best of" tours later in the season.

THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MAILING ADDRESS

PO Box 561
West Tisbury, MA 02575

508-693-9426 Tel
508-693-5772 Fax
www.pollyhillarboretum.org

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

The Homestead
809 State Road
West Tisbury, MA 02575

VISITOR CENTER

795 State Road
West Tisbury, MA 02575

ACCESSIBILITY

The Visitor Center is wheelchair accessible.

VISITOR CENTER HOURS

Memorial Day weekend to
Columbus Day: 9:30 am–4 pm

ARBORETUM GROUNDS HOURS

Sunrise–sunset, year-round

TOURS

Memorial Day weekend through
Columbus Day: 2 pm daily

ADMISSION

\$5 suggested donation
Free to members and children under 12

FREE PARKING

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

See www.pollyhillarboretum.org

mer.i.stem: *n. botany.* The growing point or area of rapidly dividing cells at the tip of a stem, root, or branch.



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ARBORETUM DESTINATIONS



Our American beech grove feels like a secret room. Located near the Visitor Center, yet off the beaten path, this circle of beeches forms a sylvan retreat. American beech trees often grow in groves, sprouting clonally from one

original root system, edging out other trees and understory vegetation. Their smooth, mighty grey trunks branch into sturdy boughs; boughs give way to branches, forming a dense canopy overhead. The chartreuse new

foliage shines jewel-like among the fine grey branches in the spring. In fall the same foliage glows with a radiant bronze yellow. This area is also home to some sturdy white oaks and a small grove of sassafras. Five

rustic picnic tables built by the Dunkle family of Chilmark are set among the trees, inviting folks to enjoy a picnic lunch, or just sit, under the leafy canopy of Polly Hill Arboretum's Vineyard woodland.