

Sassafras albidum

Arboretum Acquires New Land Parcel

This past summer the Polly Hill Arboretum and the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society jointly purchased a 9.7-acre land parcel just south of our property line. The portion PHA received is a long, narrow buffer strip encompassing just under two acres. The land extends from the midpoint of Polly's Play Pen, south 100 feet, and 850 feet west to our property border with the Frances Newhall Woods Preserve. This purchase, subdivided between PHA and the Ag Society, ensures that the land will be maintained in the agrarian spirit of West Tisbury for future generations.

Longtime Arboretum members may recall the acquisition of the Littlefield property in 2002. At that time, the MV Museum (in a collaborative effort) pur-

chased the Littlefield property and immediately sold 9.7 acres to PHA and 5 acres to the Ag Society while retaining 9.7 acres for the development of a new campus in West Tisbury. However, plans can change, and last year the MV Museum decided to pursue a different location for their new museum. The land was put up for sale creating both uncertainty and opportunity for PHA. A decision had to be made quickly.

The board of directors and staff of PHA did not want the property to fall into the hands of unknown buyers who might develop or build immediately adjacent to the Arboretum. Foremost in our thinking was the potential impact on our visitors' experience, more specifically, retaining the secluded beauty of Polly's Play Pen, but

we also saw utilitarian reasons to pursue this opportunity. One foreseeable use for this land is as a maintenance access point and buffer to our proposed woodland garden to be located nearby. The land also includes a classic Vineyard stone wall which stretches from State Road to our western boundary.

We are thankful for the representatives of the Ag Society who worked with us on this purchase. We are also thankful for the PHA board of directors and all our supporters who enabled us to move quickly on this extraordinary opportunity. We are certain that PHA visitors and West Tisbury residents will look back favorably on our decision to purchase and preserve this land—it was the right thing to do.

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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 iconic Far Barn represents our rural history.

Message from the Director

Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—I smile with skepticism when I hear this expression that sounds like a sales pitch. We all know many so-called once-in-a-lifetime opportunities are not worth taking. Opportunities can be risky, a game of chance, yet occasionally there are rare opportunities that simply cannot be missed.

This year the unexpected chance to obtain land was just such a situation. Making the most of this unusual opportunity took cooperation, dollars, and a lot of hard work. However, after much deliberation, conversation, and negotiation, PHA now owns a new two-acre parcel, a buffer zone for the Arboretum just south of our property border. In these tough economic times, it was a costly purchase, but we feel certain the future benefits are incalculable.

We opened the season with a new event, “Spring into Summer,” that included tours, a plant sale, and educational programs. It marked the first use of the renovated Far Barn. The renovation has garnered appreciation and drawn praise from members and visitors. The work was done with care, thoughtfulness, patience, and persistence. The results speak for themselves.

As to once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, enjoying nature in the moment is a singular experience which PHA offers countless opportunities. This season we experienced the most incredible display of flowering in the past 20 years! This phenomenon occurred along the entire east coast of North America. So stunning was the production of flowers and fruit by both trees and shrubs I was awed.

Certainly these are interesting times for PHA, what Polly would call the “teenage years.” Sustaining growth requires both patience and persistence. Patience speaks to recognizing our limitations in this economic downturn, and persistence reflects our determination. Because we grow things for a living we are familiar with both.

I am comforted by the cyclic nature of the seasons that bring natural beauty and ever-changing vistas to our landscape. Our trees, both young and old, carry on regardless of market trends, volatility, or whatever is spinning on the TV or the internet. Please come to the Arboretum and see for yourself. Plan a winter visit during our quiet season. We look forward to seeing you!

Adding Up Acres

The Polly Hill Arboretum recently expanded by 2 acres to encompass a total of 72 acres of land. The Arboretum property in total was acquired through a series of purchases made by Margaret and Howard Butcher (Polly's parents), Polly Hill, and the Polly Hill Arboretum, Inc. The account of our land acquisition takes place over 85 years.

The story begins in 1926 with the sale of 40 acres of rural farmland, the property which forms the core of today's arboretum, to Margaret and Howard Butcher. Margaret named the property Barnard's Inn Farm to honor Barnard Luce and the inn he once operated from the Homestead. Over the next 30 years, she repaired and modernized the farm buildings, including renovating the old barn into the family home, now known as the Cowbarn.

After her mother's death in 1957, Polly and her husband, Julian, assumed care of the farm, inheriting the land in 1969 after her father's death. That same year Polly and Julian purchased a 20-acre strip of land along the northern boundary that was then part of the Priester property to create a buffer along the edge of the farm. Perhaps Polly also had her eye on the trees as she noted that along with it came four mature beech trees. Some of this area is now used for our Visitor Center entrance and parking.



The core of the Arboretum consists of 40 acres that was once a working farm.

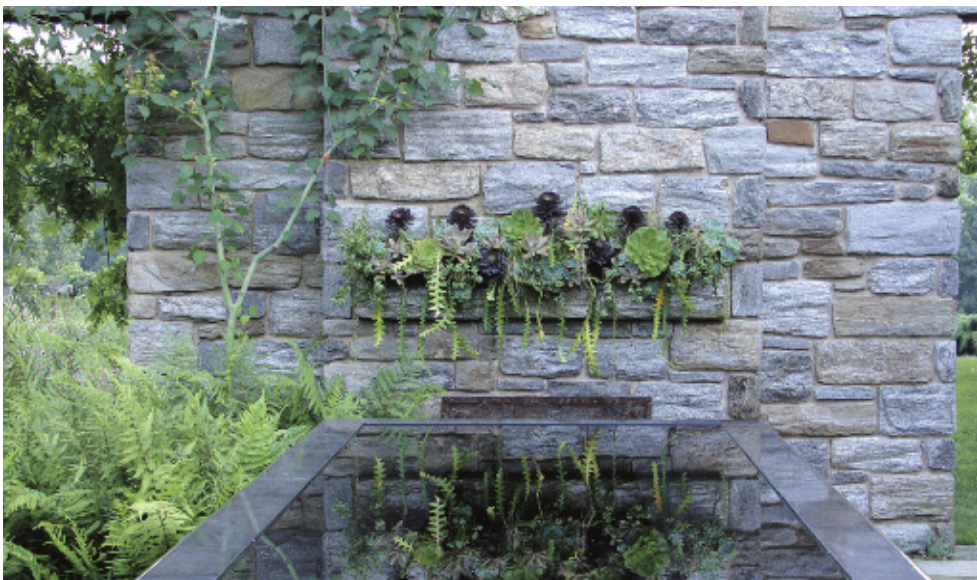
In June of 1997 Dr. David Smith formed Polly Hill Arboretum Inc. and purchased the 60-acre Barnard's Inn Farm from the Hill family to preserve Polly Hill's horticultural legacy. Ten more acres, including the Littlefield farmhouse, were added a few years later in 2002 when the adjacent 25-acre Littlefield property on the Arboretum's southern boundary became available. It was purchased through the collaborative efforts of the MV Agricultural Society, the Martha's Vineyard Museum (MVM), and PHA.

This past summer PHA acquired an additional 2 acres through a joint purchase with the Agricultural Society of the MVM portion of the 2002 purchase. We

are pleased to have acquired this piece of property. It creates an additional buffer to Polly's Play Pen and a future woodland garden and also ensures a continuum of a rural agricultural land use.

To sum up: $40 + 20 + 10 + 2 = 72$ total acres of land. Today the Arboretum comprises a significant area of open space in the town of West Tisbury, Massachusetts, and is central to an even larger area of conserved land nearby including the contiguous 512-acre Frances Newhall Woods preserve. Seventy-two acres: We are proud to preserve, maintain, and grow this significant asset for the public's education and enjoyment.

Annual Lisina and Frank W. Hoch Lecture



Learn about the captivating gardens of Chanticleer from director Bill Thomas on July 18, 7:30pm.

In recognition of the contributions of Lisina and Frank Hoch, PHA has established an annual lecture in their honor. The lecture will focus on great American gardens and will bring the best and brightest of the arboreta and botanical garden world to our island. It will provide an opportunity for community members to travel to the nation's great gardens while seated in the Far Barn. Also, PHA staff and board members will have the opportunity to share the Arboretum with the leading minds in our profession. We are grateful to Lisina and Frank Hoch for their contributions as board members and supporters and in 2012 we welcome our inaugural speaker: William (Bill) Thomas, director of Chanticleer, located in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

Meristems Receives Award

It always feels good to receive recognition for a job well done. Therefore, it felt wonderful when our newsletter, *Meristems*, received the Dorothy E. Hansell Publication Award at the American Public Gardens Association's annual meeting in June. PHA Volunteer Coordinator & Plant Recorder Nancy Weaver was on hand to accept the award. The Hansell award is presented to the best overall membership newsletter among our professional peers. Entries are evaluated according to structure

and overall design, content, and appropriate use of graphics and fonts.

We thank our graphic designer, Lorraine Ferguson, and editor, Laura Coit, for their outstanding work. Special thanks as well go to Karin Stanley for her dedication and skill in managing the production of *Meristems* and to all the PHA staff who contribute both photographs and articles; it is truly a group effort. Congratulations to all!



Marnie Conley (left), department head at Longwood Gardens, presents Nancy Weaver with the Hansell award.

Farewell to Alyssa Janilla

One of the most rewarding aspects of the Arboretum's internship program is witnessing the professional growth of our students. We watch from afar as they complete school, intern at other gardens, find employment, and make their way in the world of horticulture. Occasionally they come back to us and we have the opportunity to witness their growth firsthand. Such was the case with Alyssa Janilla who returned to PHA last March as our collections management intern.

She arrived with clear expectations and clarity of purpose. In her application she stated, "I want to wholly intensify my experience in public gardening."

And that she did. The internship provided a breadth of experience and an in-depth look at operations. She appreciated the attention from staff mentioning that "everyone at PHA does a great job of ensuring that the internship is a learning experience." Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark is quick to add, "It's a two-way street. The Arboretum benefits equally. We all appreciate what Alyssa contributed."

Her prior PHA experience meant she was able to pick up where she left off as our 2008 summer intern. For example, Alyssa eagerly re-engaged taking on the maintenance and evaluation of the baptisia trial beds she had planted in 2008.

Also, she ably assumed the responsibility of managing the watering of plants installed on the grounds within the past three years. This essential task provided intimate knowledge of the living collection as well as managerial experience; she coordinated the summer interns to assist.

The collections management internship involves curatorial work. Alyssa was involved with the curation of the Conifer Rows. Alyssa and Tom went row by row, plant by plant, completing an inventory and assessment of the collection. "It was wonderful working on this project with her. Her organization and meticulous observations were key to the project's success," says Tom.

Reflecting on her experience at PHA, Alyssa adds that community support is an important part of what makes the Arboretum work. She says "volunteers are the Arboretum's extended family—their enthusiasm for leading tours, working on the grounds, and teaching kids is a constant reminder of the joys of working with plants." Absolutely true and the same could be said of our interns!

When asked about her next step Alyssa expresses some uncertainty, however ideas and options abound for this bright, creative, and energetic woman. She affirms that working with the public to share her love of horticulture is definitely in her future. We look forward to cheering her on from afar.



Collections management intern Alyssa Janilla

Summer Interns

Each summer our Feldman summer internship program provides us with youthful enthusiasm and much needed summer help. This year Sarah Dickert and David Weller quickly became essential members of our team. Both interns expressed that everyone at PHA was welcoming and helpful and how much that added to their experience.

A recent graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a degree in landscape contracting and horticulture, Sarah was pleased to put her formal education to practical use and to expand her plant palette. Her summer experience confirmed her desire to pursue a career in public gardening. Sarah's favorite project involved propagating Polly's cultivars from cuttings. In fine experimental tradition she stuck cuttings of monkey-puzzle tree—these trees are usually propagated by seed. We promised to keep her posted on the results.

David also enjoyed the educational aspect of working in a public garden and was impressed by our research. He appreciated the daily balance of hard work coupled with learning opportunities. David found the periodic walks with Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark invaluable;



PHA summer interns David Weller and Sarah Dickert (center) with sponsor Sam Feldman and daughters Dene (far left) and Leigh (far right)

they gave him the opportunity to learn the bloom cycle of many plants. David's favorite project was the production of herbarium specimens of Polly's introductions as well as of our Stewartia collection. The artistic and scientific aspects of this work suit him well.

Sarah and David have both found new

internship positions. Sarah accepted a horticultural internship program at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and David has taken a research internship at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. We wish them both the best of luck with their future careers. We are pleased to say: they got their start at PHA!

Bees and Borers and Bugs, Oh My!

This past summer PHA collaborated on three insect surveys: one monitored the diversity of native bees, and two looked for the presence of invasive insect pests.

The first survey was in collaboration with Smithsonian entomologist Dr. Paul Goldstein who led an effort by the Trustees of Reservations to document the Island's native pollinator diversity. More than 400 native bee species occur in New England (of 4,000 nationwide). It is estimated that as many as 200 species of native bees may occur on Martha's Vineyard alone. Until this summer, however, no formal inventory had been undertaken. The Arboretum was approached because we have plants in our collections that have not been studied for their ability to attract pollinators.

Identifying plants that are valued for

their ability to draw native bees may help inform land management practices near farms where a "pollinator crisis" has interfered with crop pollination. Numerous traps were set to collect bees that were later sent to entomologists for identification.

The second survey monitored for the presence of emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive exotic pest that has devastated tens of thousands of ash trees in the Midwest and is bearing down on the forests of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has taken decisive measures to ensure early detection of this destructive insect. This past summer, ash trees across the state "blossomed" with purple prism traps. One of PHA's ash trees sported a trap that we monitored, hoping not to

find the borer. We are happy to report the presence of EAB was not detected.

The third insect survey was in partnership with the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). This survey targeted many species of exotic bark-boring beetles including the Mediterranean pine engraver beetle and the European hardwood ambrosia beetle. Three Lindgren funnel traps were placed on trees in the Arboretum to monitor for these potential pests. Collections were made bi-weekly and sent to the APHIS lab in Connecticut for identification. At the conclusion of the survey, exotic bark-boring beetles were not found. No news is good news, and in this case, no news is also valid data in the on-going fight against invasive species.

Arboretum Loses Friend, Rose Treat

On November 17, 2011, Rose Treat, artist, naturalist, and Arboretum friend, passed away at the age of 102. Known as Rosie to her friends, the gift of her marine algae (seaweed) collection in December of 2001 marked the beginning of the Arboretum's herbarium; a total of 421 seaweed specimens are now housed at the PHA herbarium in special protective cabinets. A memorial in her honor will be held at the PHA on June 9, 2012. Watch for more information as plans develop. To see examples and specimens of Rosie's work, and a full obituary from *The Vineyard Gazette*, visit our



PHA Executive Director Tim Boland with Rose Treat in 2008

webpage at www.pollyhillarboretum.org/science/herbarium/.

Board News

This July the PHA Board of Directors welcomed new board member Susan H. Wasserman and bade farewell to Tatnall L. Hillman, Lisina M. Hoch, and Thomas C. Wallace.

We extend a warm welcome to longtime West Tisbury resident Susan (Suzi) Wasserman. Her family knew Polly and Julian Hill and she remembers the treat it was to visit Polly and go for a tour. Suzi notes, "Polly provides all of us with an unusual role model. She began this work at 50. Think what each of us can accomplish. And imagine how working together this institution can continue to grow! I am so pleased to join the Polly Hill Arboretum board and be a part of this future."

Suzi brings a wealth of experience and a history of community involvement to our board. Her numerous local accomplishments include board positions with the League of Women Voters, two terms on the board of directors of Martha's Vineyard Community Services (with six years as president), president of the Friends of the West Tisbury Library, member of the Island Plan steering committee, and current board member of the Vineyard Energy Project. We look forward to working with Suzi!

We bid farewell and extend thanks to Tatnall Hillman (Polly Hill's nephew) who has served on our board since 2002. He has agreed to continue his involvement by assisting us with special projects. We expect to see both Tatnall and Bobbie Hillman in the years ahead exploring the grounds with their grandchildren. Tom Wallace has also left the board after serving since 2008. We thank Tom for his service.

We also thank Lisina Hoch for her years of dedicated service. Lisina took over the board position of her late husband, Frank Hoch, who retired from the board in 2005. Since that time Lisina (like Frank) has been a strong advocate for education, conservation, and science. At our October board meeting, Lisina Hoch was unanimously voted in as an honorary board member. Though Lisina is stepping down from the board, we expect her to remain active and interested in our activities, and we look forward to her continued presence at the Arboretum.

Help On the Way for the Play Pen

The Arboretum is thrilled to announce the receipt of a \$14,600 competitive grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. The grant will be used for the reconstruction of Polly's Play Pen. The Play Pen was built in the early 1970s to enclose and protect from deer a diverse assemblage of small plants including many of Polly's most cherished specimens. The enclosed

garden's fence and gates are now dilapidated, rusted, and unsightly. Island craftsmen Tucker Hubbell and Ben Clark, along with PHA staff, will tackle the renovation project this winter. This is an important next step in the rehabilitation of Polly's Play Pen that began last year with a thorough evaluation and rejuvenation plan for the living collection.

Enkianthus Article Appears in *The Plantsman*



The June 2011 issue of *The Plantsman* (a publication of the Royal Horticultural Society) features a genus profile titled "*Enkianthus in Cultivation*." This extensive article, co-written by PHA Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark, PHA research associate Eric Hsu, and director of the Arboretum Wespelaar in Belgium Koen Camelbeke, is the second collaboration between PHA and Arboretum Wespelaar to be published in this prestigious journal.

The entire article can be viewed through our website at www.pollyhillarboretum.org/plants/enkianthus-2/ and clicking on the link to the article.

The Plantsman, The Royal Horticultural Society, New Series Volume 10, Part 2, June 2011. Thomas Clark, Eric Hsu, and Koen Camelbeke

Staff News

It has been a busy year for PHA staff. In June Volunteer Coordinator & Plant Recorder Nancy Weaver and collections management intern Alyssa Janilla attended the American Public Gardens Association's (APGA) annual conference in Philadelphia. In addition to attending workshops and receiving an award, they connected with colleagues from the Delaware Valley.

In August while the rest of the staff fretted over the arrival of Tropical Storm Irene, Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark was in sunny Rohnert Park, California, attending a plant exploration symposium. Hosted by the APGA and Quarryhill Botanic Garden, the symposium attracted colleagues from across North America, Europe, and Asia.

In November Senior Horticulturist/Arborist Steve Masterson attended the Tree Care Industry Expo 2011 in Hartford, Connecticut. Education sessions focused on a wide range of topics from arborist safety and pruning to the latest research concerning insect and disease pests. Through these classes Steve gains credit toward maintaining his International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist

status. An associated trade show gave Steve the chance to talk “nuts and bolts” about new tools and equipment.

Executive Director Tim Boland presented a wide range of lectures this year. On-Island he spoke to the West Chop Club on sustainable landscape practices while a summer trip to Nantucket afforded an opportunity to speak on the natural history of MV at the annual meeting of the Nantucket Land Council. This fall Tim travelled coast to coast sharing his enthusiasm for stewartia with his talk “Stunning Stewartia: A Tree for All Seasons,” speaking to the Northwest Horticulture Society in Seattle and the Metro Hort Group of New York City.

In October Tim Boland and Tom Clark attended the first regional training workshop for the Sentinel Plant Network (SPN). SPN contributes to plant conservation by engaging public garden professionals, volunteers, and visitors in the detection and diagnosis of potentially devastating pests and pathogens.

Through involvement in SPN the Arboretum will have access to training and diagnostic support to better monitor and



PHA Research Associate Shigeto Tsukie and Collections & Grounds Manager Tom Clark at the APGA plant exploration symposium in California

protect the health of our living collection and to better educate and engage the community regarding the impact of destructive plant pests such as Asian long-horned beetle, winter moth, and emerald ash borer.

Funded through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Sentinel Plant Network is a collaboration between the American Public Gardens Association and the National Plant Diagnostics Network (NPDN). This partnership enables NPDN to extend “First Detector” training expertise and public outreach programs to PHA and other public gardens across the country. Early detection of potentially dangerous exotic species is the first and best step in managing or eliminating their destructive impact.

Lisina and Frank Hoch: Foundation, Friendship, and Commitment to Science by Tim Boland

Lisina and Frank Hoch were close friends of Polly and Julian Hill. They have been involved with the Arboretum from the very beginning when in 1997 Frank Hoch was approached by David Smith for support in establishing the Polly Hill Arboretum. With the untimely death of David Smith in 1999, Frank Hoch graciously became chairman of the PHA board.

I think of Frank Hoch often, his wise counsel, his enthusiasm for our science programs, and his sheer joy in watching us grow. My conversations with Frank ran the gamut from tree roots, native azaleas, evolutionary biology to politics. The initial encouragement and support for a greenhouse was brought forth and nurtured by

Frank and Lisina. Without their dedication to that project, we would not have this wonderful facility or the numerous plants grown over the past five years from our national and international plant expeditions. The greenhouse also serves as an educational space where we teach courses on plant propagation.

When Lisina joined our board in 2005 she did so with great enthusiasm, a strong pragmatic nature, and, again, a deep interest in our science and education programs. One vivid memory goes back to 2006 when Frank and Lisina agreed to host Dr. Peter Raven, the world's leading authority on plant biodiversity. A lovely dinner was held at their home in Seven Gates Farm where

people from all the Island conservation groups had gathered. Dr. Raven remarked to me, “You really have something special here on Martha's Vineyard, of course, it all starts with passionate people.”

“It all starts with passionate people.” That remark describes my feelings for Frank and Lisina Hoch—interested, passionate, supportive advocates. I feel so grateful for their friendship, encouragement, and support, from our very beginning. To recognize both Lisina and Frank Hoch for their outstanding contributions, an annual lecture (See article on page 3.) has been established in their honor.

Warning: This Article Contains Nuts!

by Tom Clark

Every year at Thanksgiving a bowl of in-the-shell mixed nuts appeared on our counter. You know the mix: smooth oblong pecans; brown wedge-shaped brazil nuts; teardrop oval almonds; walnuts with the tiny red logo; and my personal favorite, little round filberts, also known as hazelnuts. It was real work, plus real adventure, cracking them open and chasing after the nut bits flung free piñata style. My affinity for hazelnuts has only increased as I learn more about the other members of the genus *Corylus*.

About 20 species of *Corylus*, including two natives, occur across the north temperate regions of the world—all deciduous trees and shrubs. Both North American species, American and beaked hazelnut (*C. americana* and *C. cornuta*), are thicket-forming shrubs reaching roughly 6 to 10 feet tall. Both occur naturally on the Vineyard where their likely haunts include mixed oak woodlands and hedgerows. Fulling Mill Brook Preserve is a prime area for tracking down American hazel, and the Chappy Community Center is a good base from where to explore the surrounding woodlands for the less common beaked hazel.

Both hazelnuts are among the first native plants to bloom, the flowers coinciding with the emergence of skunk cabbage in March. Like fellow members of the birch family (Betulaceae), hazels are monoecious. This means separate unisex flowers appear on the same plant. The female flowers, starry tufts comprised of crimson styles, appear on leafless stems at a time when there is little color in the Vineyard landscape. This floral display is subtle at best, but the delight in spotting these tiny blooms, anything but.

The male flowers occur in slender, cylindrical, pendant structures called catkins appearing along the branches. Formed the previous year and exposed throughout winter, they are a ready clue to the plant's identity. As spring arrives the catkins elongate and in March when the male flowers open, clouds of yellow pollen are borne away on the breeze. It's no surprise this plant is wind pollinated.

Throughout the growing season both native hazels are cloaked in irregularly shaped, coarsely toothed, medium green leaves arranged alternately along the stems. Young stems and petioles are typically



Natural distribution in North America of American hazelnut (top) and beaked hazelnut (below). Maps courtesy of The Flora of North America

covered with glandular hairs that are frequently tinged red; leaves, too, generally have some pubescence at least along the primary veins and especially when young.

By late summer when the fairgrounds come to life and Chinese lanterns adorn the cottages, the hazelnuts are quickly maturing. The clusters of 2 to 6 nuts, still pale green but nearing full size, are noticeable to those who look, yet they remain well camouflaged among the leaves. The nuts of both species are enclosed in distinctive, leaflike, glandular bracts. It is at this point that the two hazels are readily distinguished. In the case of the American hazel (*C. americana*) the bracts tightly enfold each nut and meet atop clamshell fashion in a flattened, irregularly fringed ruffle. The beaked hazel (*C. cornuta*) is similar but instead of a leafy ruffle, the bracts extend into an elongated tubelike beak.

In about another month the bracts turn yellowish, then brown, and the roundish nuts within turn tan or reddish brown save for a paler disc where they were attached



Present throughout the winter, male flowers of both hazelnut species occur in catkins.



Distinctly different fruits of American hazelnut (*above*) and beaked hazelnut (*below*) allow for easy identification.

to the enveloping bracts. Another indication of ripeness: the nuts will readily dislodge from their attendant bracts with little effort. Once fully ripe the race is on between chipmunks, squirrels, birds, and human foragers for the protein-rich nuts. They are of a similar quality and flavor as the filberts of my youth and just as irksome to crack.

Though not a showy ornamental, as garden subjects our native hazels have several worthy characteristics, not the least of which is adaptability. Both grow readily in drier, sandy soils as well as moist, rich soil, and in either situation they make an admirable component of a naturalistic planting. If the plant gets out of hand, it can be cut back to ground level in winter or early spring; vigorous regeneration to follow. Although fuller in a sunny site, each will grow in fairly deep shade though the habit will be looser. In the fall the leaves can turn a pleasing yellow and in some years fiery shades of orange and red.

These native shrubs are often found growing along the Island's old stone walls. Trace along the course of one of these walls and you're sure to encounter at least one of the Vineyard's two native hazelnuts. Whether it's the earliest flowers or the distinctive nuts you seek, the search is a welcome diversion no matter the season.



Fiery fall brilliance of American hazelnut

Autumn's Sweet Surprise:

Osmanthus heterophyllus by Alyssa Janilla

For those fortunate to visit the Arboretum in the autumn, there are the obvious visual delights—bronzy purples, dusky oranges, brilliant yellows, shining crimsons. A wander through the Dogwood Allée reveals a patchwork of flaking bark on every trunk; red fruit speckles the ground and rolls underfoot. However, there are also more subtle pleasures: as you reach the end of the Allée, an unexpected aroma permeates the air. Sweet, more akin to springtime than the earthy smells of fall, the delicate perfume beckons.

Against the stone wall overlooking the Littlefield House you'll find the fragrance factory: a large, evergreen, holly like shrub.



O. heterophyllus 'Gulf tide' displays glossy foliage with prominent spines.

But instead of reddening berries, small clusters of white flowers originate from the axils of its thick, waxy leaves. With closer inspection, you'll notice the leaves are opposite along the stem, not alternate like those of a holly. Surprise! You have just discovered the holly tea-olive, *Osmanthus heterophyllus*.

Native to Japan and Taiwan, *O. heterophyllus* was introduced into cultivation in

1856 by Thomas Lobb, British botanist and plant collector for Veitch Nurseries. *O. heterophyllus* typically grows 8 to 10 feet tall with a slightly lesser spread, but can attain 20 feet in optimum conditions. Mature specimens may produce ½-inch-long dark blue-purple fruits technically called drupes. The admirable individual near the Littlefield House was received as a rooted cutting in 1977 from Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Maryland. The little "ossie" was planted where it stands today and 34 years later has developed into an impressive specimen, 12 feet tall by 8 feet wide.

Each inflorescence of *O. heterophyllus* produces its distinctive scent: a delicate interplay of jasmine and orange blossom with a hint of lilac. In late September through early November this powerful, yet not overpowering, redolence wafts through the air, greeting a happy nose over 25 yards away. This sweet-scented plant is a member of the olive family (Oleaceae). Other fragrant genera in the family include lilac (*Syringa*), privet (*Ligustrum*), and jasmine (*Jasminum*).

The scientific name *Osmanthus heterophyllus* is an apt one for this enticing evergreen. *Osmanthus* is a combination of the Greek words "osme" meaning fragrant and "anthos" meaning flower. The specific epithet *heterophyllus* is Latin for having leaves of more than one form. This refers to the propensity of juvenile growth to be spiny with a triangular base and tapering tip while mature leaves become oval-shaped and smooth.

The holly tea-olive and its cultivars are simple and rewarding to grow. Select a location that offers part sun. If this is not available, *O. heterophyllus* will tolerate varying light levels; however, a shady, protected location is more suitable than full sun. Plant in well-drained, fertile, acidic soil; if growing in poor soil, amend with good compost. These uncommon plants suffer from few insect or disease problems.

Seven species of *Osmanthus* have been planted at the Arboretum, only two of which have proven hardy to the chill of



One o'clock moving clockwise: *Osmanthus armatus*, *O. heterophyllus* mature, *O. heterophyllus* juvenile, *O. heterophyllus* 'Purpureus' mature, *O. heterophyllus* 'Purpureus' juvenile, *O. heterophyllus* 'Rotundifolius.' Center: *O. heterophyllus* 'Gulf tide'

our Vineyard winters: *O. armatus* and *O. heterophyllus*. Three cultivars of *O. heterophyllus* stand proudly on the Arboretum grounds. 'Rotundifolius' is compact and squat, reaching only 5 to 8 feet. This selection has distinct leaf margins as if someone has clipped off the tips and upper edges to create a blunt pattern. The shiny and spiny leaves of *O. heterophyllus* 'Gulf tide' give this cultivar a hollylike look. 'Gulf tide' is narrow and upright, reaching 10 to 15 feet tall. *O. heterophyllus* 'Purpureus' stands 10 feet tall and is the hardiest of the species. Mature growth of this exceptional selection is dark green while juvenile leaves don a coppery beet-purple tinge.



The opposite leaf arrangement of *O. heterophyllus* (left) distinguishes it from holly (right) which has alternate leaves.

Robbie Hutchison

Osmanthus heterophyllus is often used as a specimen planting and can also make an incredibly thick (and fragrant!) screen or hedge. It is an excellent candidate for espalier because of its flexible branches, tolerance of heavy pruning, and attractive creamy bark. A delightful addition to any USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 6 through 8 garden, *O. heterophyllus* is a necessity for gardeners looking for an appealing alternative to holly. Its fragrance alone is reason enough to cultivate this plant—perfumed and promising—a sweet surprise to carry us into the winter.

Robbie Hutchison values her time spent as a volunteer PHA tour guide for many reasons. First, it gives her a compelling reason for an Arboretum visit. “If I don’t schedule time to walk through this beautiful place, it just won’t happen,” she says. “Signing up to give a tour on my free Sundays makes sure that it does.”

A volunteer for over ten years, by now Robbie has made countless visits to PHA.

As a landscape designer at Donaroma’s Nursery in Edgartown, she finds her PHA visits also improve her design work. She says there is a lot to learn from the



Volunteer Robbie Hutchison enjoys fall at PHA.

Arboretum and she appreciates the opportunity to observe plants throughout the seasons. She adds that Polly Hill was both a horticulturist and a designer who planted with intention. As a southerner, Robbie is impressed by the wide range of our plant collection and is always pleased to see familiar southern species growing here. She planted a southern magnolia at her home in Edgartown after discovering that Polly grew one here.

In addition she finds her walks through the Arboretum refresh her educational training. Robbie has a graduate certificate from George Washington University’s landscape design program (in addition to a BS in environmental science from University of Virginia and a MS in computer science from George Washington University). She says knowing plants is like speaking a language; if you don’t keep using it, your knowledge gets dusty.

Robbie enjoys the people she meets on her tours and loves sharing plant information. She encourages interested PHA visitors to just try gardening—start with something small, choose the right plant for the right place, and learn from observing what works for others.

Her advice to other volunteers is to come and have fun. She adds, “Don’t be intimidated by giving tours! PHA has such great features and trees, such as the Dogwood Allée and the stewartia collection; it’s always easy to find something to talk about.” She adds that our labels help her sound super smart and that Nancy’s volunteer training is a great learning experience.

With her passion for plants and for the Arboretum, we are lucky that Robbie makes it a point to schedule time for us, and for herself, at PHA. For information on becoming a volunteer, contact Nancy Weaver at 508-693-9426.



The purple growth and white flowers of *O. heterophyllus* ‘Purpureus’ create a stunning display in late October.

THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

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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



The Arboretum's open fields are the centerpiece of our landscape. Polly's mother, Margaret Butcher, loved these sunny open spaces as did Polly, who, despite her desire to add to her collection of trees, vowed never to

plant in the fields. She felt the open fields honored the farmers who originally cleared this land to tend sheep. Polly also believed in the importance of vistas and sited this swinging bench where a visitor could take in

the long view—across the field to the Far Barn. The bench, added in the late 1960s, was made from granite posts that were likely from a pile of quarried rock left in the field since the Butcher's original purchase of the land in 1926.

Today we continue to keep our fields open through a program of mowing and controlled burns. And PHA visitors continue to enjoy the view from the bench at the corner of the West Field.