

Meristems

The Polly Hill Arboretum
West Tisbury, Massachusetts

Vol. 14, No. 1 Spring 2012



Enkianthus campanulatus 'Showy Lantern'

Polly's Play Pen Renovated

The serene atmosphere of Polly's Play Pen makes it a favorite destination; nonetheless, it was built to serve a utilitarian purpose. Many of you already know the historic significance of this special Arboretum feature. Polly wanted an area where her small experimental plants would be protected from deer and rabbits until they were large enough to be planted on the grounds. In the early 1970s she devised a solution: a huge 30-foot-wide by 300-foot-long garden enclosed by a tall wire fence. Her husband, Julian, coined the name Polly's playpen, and it stuck.

Reflecting back over the past 40 years, Polly's Play Pen remains our most visited destination and the origin of many of Polly's famed varieties; however, the structure had become deteriorated. The wooden

frame that supported the old fence had rotted; the stainless steel fencing was compromised by rust and holes; and the base of the fencing had been patched numerous times to prevent entry by rabbits. The playpen had reached a crossroads. Just in time (last December) we received the exciting news that a \$14,600 Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust Grant had been awarded to PHA to support a renovation.

We are happy to report, mere months later, the renovation is complete! The replacement fence is an artistic assemblage of black locust wood and wire fencing. Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is used Island wide for its durable and rot-resistant wood. The sinewy branches (now posts) were stripped of their bark, placed at ten-foot intervals, and connected overhead to

form the framework of the new Play Pen. The black poly-coated wire blends seamlessly with the oak woodland to the south and the conifer rows to the north. The doorway frames support new entry doors that visitors will find easier to open and close. New and improved is an understatement! Come see for yourself.

Congratulations to PHA staff Tom Clark, Karin Stanley, and Tim Boland on the successful grant application that made this work possible. A hearty thank-you goes to Tucker Hubbell and Ben Clark of Rising Sun Construction as well as special thanks to our PHA construction crew members, Steve Masterson, Ian Jochems, and Jaime Morin.

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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 Playpen renovation project is another example of preservation at the PHA.

Message from the Director

We all have stories to tell. Sharing stories, the telling and the listening, is how sympathetic connections are made. And, yes, trees have stories to tell too. Our own life story begins when we are born and ends when we die. Trees have a lifespan as well: a seed germinates, grows into a sapling, moves through the teenage years that Polly so loved, comes into flower, produces seed, reaches maturity, and eventually declines. The bulk of the PHA collections began in the late 50s. Many of our trees have passed their zenith, and are gracefully embracing their closing years. But as with people, care and nurturing makes a difference and can enrich and extend life. This year we engaged in two projects to sustain our trees. The kousa dogwood soil replacement project moved into its second stage; the first stage revived a struggling group of trees. The second project is a crown reduction and cabling of our largest native black oak. This oak predates the purchase of the property in 1926 by

Polly Hill's parents. In her wisdom and admiration for this monarch tree, Polly preserved the black oak as well as two large post oaks that reside on opposite ends of the West Field. Who knows what stories these trees could tell? Every tree and plant at the PHA has a story. Each year we tell stories of the new trees on our grounds, the places from where the plants came, and the people involved. You as members, volunteers, and particularly our docents relish these stories and share them with others. Strong connections are made to the landscape, to the trees, and to our visitors. Please plan to visit the Arboretum this summer to hear our stories, old and new—as always, guided tours by knowledgeable docents are given at 2pm daily. I encourage you to visit often and share your enthusiasm for this special landscape.

Timothy M. Boland

Staff News

This January Collections and Grounds Manager Tom Clark presented *Stewartia: Trees for All Seasons* to the Connecticut chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. A connection made at the talk led to the acquisition of *Stewartia rostrata* 'Pink Satin', a new pink-flowered form of beaked stewartia from Broken Arrow Nursery in Hamden, Connecticut. Also in January, Volunteer Coordinator & Plant Recorder Nancy Weaver attended a class at Harvard focusing on Arc GIS (Geographic Information System), a software application designed to visualize, manipulate, analyze, and display spatial data in managed landscapes and public gardens.

Senior Horticulturist/Arborist Steve Masterson has been involved with the Martha's Vineyard Prescribed Fire Partnership for over five years, which, aside from the pyrotechnical aspects, seeks to share land management expertise across its partner organizations. In March Steve led a workshop on chainsaw safety and maintenance for members of the partnership, and in April he conducted a workshop on tree felling techniques.

Executive Director Tim Boland published an article on new magnolia cultivars in the spring issue of *Magnolia: the Journal of the Magnolia Society*. Now in his tenth year as the society's registrar, Tim reviews

cultivar applications from around the world. Also on magnolia business, Tim travelled to Petaluma, California, to attend the Magnolia Society International annual meeting in March. Closer to home, Tim is working with staff of Sheriff's Meadow Foundation and the MV Land Bank Commission to review historical records of rare plants at the Harvard University Herbaria in preparation for the production of a web-based flora for Martha's Vineyard. Tim is also working with research associate David Foster on bringing together modern floristic maps and the historical forest distributions on Martha's Vineyard using GIS technologies.

Welcome Ian

We are pleased to welcome Ian Jochems to the PHA staff as full-time Horticulturist. Ian moved from Ft. Collins, Colorado, where he acquired experience in residential and commercial horticulture including work at the Gardens on Spring Creek (soon to become the Northern Colorado Botanical Garden). In December 2011 Ian graduated Colorado State University with a degree in environmental horticulture and a concentration in nursery production and management. By late January he was looking forward to joining our team.

We're thrilled to have Ian at PHA; it took all of eleven minutes to confirm that we had made a great decision. From Day One, Ian jumped in where needed. We'd find him grubbing out stumps, pruning, helping in the greenhouse, working on the Play Pen project—all with an enthusiastic and cooperative spirit. The mild spring allowed us to get a jump on spring planting and Ian was there. First tree planted: fragrant epaulette tree (*Pterostyrax hispida*). Look for it growing near the Cow Barn.

Coming from the dramatically different climate of Colorado, Ian enjoys learning about plants that simply won't grow in the Rocky Mountain State. One of Ian's favorite plants, stewartia, is a perfect



Ian Jochems, PHA Horticulturist

example. However, it's difficult to pin Ian down to just one or even ten favorite plants. He is the proverbial kid in the candy store, delighting in the selection. He also enjoys the stories that go with the plants. Early on while pruning a plant in the Play Pen, he commented, "This is so cool knowing that Polly planted and pruned this same plant!"

Yet more enthusiasm: Ian is excited to be part of a positive staff that is building on Polly's accomplishments, sharing her vision, and supporting the mission of PHA.

In his application Ian expressed the goal "to work for an organization where I can experience new challenges, learn new skills, and be able to work with a knowledgeable staff." He already feels that coming to PHA was a good choice and a great move that will enable him to realize his goal. Ian says, "This is more than I expected from a job coming straight out of college."

We're delighted to have Ian onboard. Please introduce yourself and welcome him on your next visit to PHA.

Welcome Jamie Morin

If Connecticut native Jaime Morin had her way, this proud 2011 Clemson University graduate would paint the world with her school colors. Last summer we spied her when the Arnold Arboretum's intern crew visited PHA. She was easy to spot with her infectious smile, bubbly enthusiasm, and screaming orange Clemson t-shirt. She expressed sincere interest in our collections management internship, and

several months later her application landed at PHA. In March she eagerly began as the Arboretum's fourth collections management intern.

While earning her degree in environmental horticulture from Clemson, Jaime found time to work at the South Carolina Botanical Garden collecting seed for conservation projects, propagating plants, and helping manage the nursery and green-

house. In her application she states, "I am looking for an intimate atmosphere where I can learn curatorial skills from a close-knit group of staff, sink my teeth into projects, and have a hands-on learning experience." Was this internship created with Jaime in mind? What better place to reach her goals than at PHA. Look for Jaime this summer perhaps this time wearing a Polly Hill t-shirt.



Jaime Morin, collections management intern

Meet the Horticulture Interns

With each passing year our summer horticulture internships become more competitive. This year we read and evaluated nearly 40 applications! How we promote the internships and the unique opportunity PHA provides are contributing factors in the rising interest, but also the growing number of past interns who are spreading the word and influencing current applicants. They are ambassadors for PHA as they continue their careers.

One such intern is Julie Jones, a University of Tennessee senior majoring in plant sciences with a concentration in landscape design. She was encouraged

to apply for the internship by her professor Andy Pulte, PHA summer intern in 1999. He spoke highly of Julie's abilities, aptitude, and work ethic. In addition to classes she is currently helping to manage the University's greenhouses and outdoor production facilities. She is eager to expand her knowledge and experience by working with the plant collections at Polly Hill.

SUNY Cobleskill plant science senior Keelan Weiss has spent the past two summers working as a gardener at private and public estates in the Berkshires including Edith Wharton's The Mount where she enjoyed working with the public as

much as the plants. With her passion for both, she sees herself working in a public garden setting in the future. Keelan feels that the internship at PHA will be the perfect addition to her education and experience.

We eagerly welcome Julie and Keelan as our 2012 summer interns. As always we appreciate the support of the Feldman family who for 15 years has generously sponsored our summer internship program. Their willingness to support this program contributes significantly to the education, training, and enthusiasm of students and the maintenance of the arboretum.

Board News

We are pleased to welcome Pam Kohlberg to the Polly Hill Arboretum Board of Directors. Over the years Pam has focused much of her nonprofit work on environmental conservation and education. She is currently co-chair of the Yale Forestry Leadership Council, a member of the board of advisors for the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts and the South Shore Natural Science Center, and an advisor to the Martha's Vineyard Vision Fund of the Kohlberg Foundation. That is the current short list! She also served on the board of the Massachusetts Chapter of The Nature Conservancy for over ten years.

Pam has always been interested in environmental issues and in 1977 earned a MFS from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. The PHA Board will benefit greatly from her interest and



Pam Kohlberg

personal connection. She notes, "Having worked with David Smith on projects with The Nature Conservancy on Martha's Vineyard, and having had a chance to meet Joan [Smith] in the process, I have eagerly followed the inception and growth of the Polly Hill Arboretum. The vision of both Polly Hill and David Smith in setting up the Arboretum makes it an outstanding resource for the Island, in particular, and for plant biologists, conservationists, and researchers in general."

Pam is pleased to be joining the PHA board. She adds that she is honored and excited to begin work with the staff and board of the Arboretum, and to learn more about the opportunities and challenges ahead.

ArbNet Accreditation

ArbNet? ArbNet is an online, interactive community of arboreta that supports the common purposes and interests of tree-focused public gardens. The ultimate goal of ArbNet is to encourage the planting and conservation of trees for a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world. Sounds right up our allée and then some!

We are pleased to announce ArbNet has awarded us the highest level (IV) of accreditation through the Morton Register of Arboreta. Morton Arboretum president Gerard Donnelly writes, "As part of the Morton Register of Arboreta, you have an

important role in our shared purpose to plant and conserve trees, and accreditation in this work acknowledges your commitment to and fulfillment of professional criteria."

Level IV accredited arboreta have met all the levels of arboretum standards specified for Level I, II, and III and demonstrate additional institutional capacity to collaborate on scientific and conservation activities related to trees. Executive Director Tim Boland comments, "We have been peer reviewed by the very best in the public garden field. The hard work

involved in the professional development of our collections has been recognized. We are very pleased to have met this standard!"

ArbNet is sponsored and coordinated by the Morton Arboretum in cooperation with the American Public Gardens Association and Botanic Gardens Conservation International. For more information about the program go to arbnet.org.

Erin McKeon, Graduate Student and PHA Intern

This season we are pleased to welcome Erin McKeon, a summer intern with a difference. Erin is currently a graduate fellow in a program at Cornell University developed in conjunction with the department of horticulture and the Cornell Plantations. This two-year master of professional studies program in public garden leadership requires an internship between

the first and second year. Though Erin is an experienced horticulturist, this internship will focus on public garden administration and development instead of plants.

Erin says that Executive Director Tim Boland's talk at the Woody Plant Conference in 2010 kindled a strong desire to work at the Arboretum. Her goal for the internship is gaining professional

experience, assisting with development, and deepening her understanding of PHA and the role it plays in the community. She is thrilled with the opportunity to join the Arboretum staff for the season. And we are excited about the opportunity this gives us to expand our development activities as well as extend our internship to the graduate level.

Summer Program Preview

This year our summer program is filled to the brim with an exciting variety of lectures and classes along with some very special events.

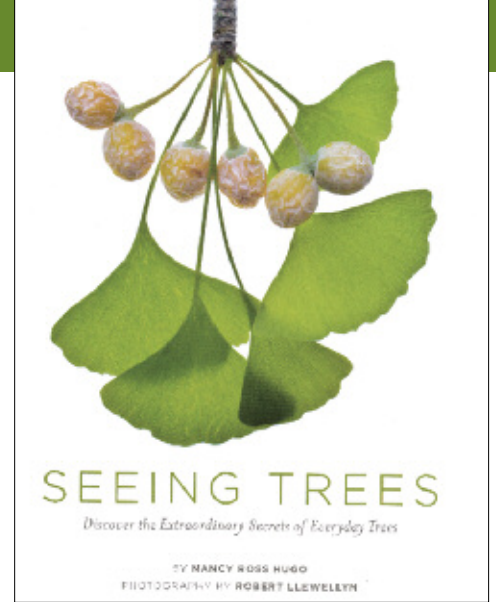
We begin our summer lecture series with a new tradition, “Know Your Arboretum.” This wine and cheese reception is followed by a staff report on PHA activities. Other evening programs include author Nancy Hugo on her book, *Seeing Trees: Discover the Extraordinary Secrets of Ordinary Trees*, and conservation biologist Dr. Richard Primack for an update on his work on the impact of climate change on plants and birds. Later in the season we welcome back horticultural designer and dynamic speaker Patrick Cullina. He will also be the featured guest for our popular evening garden stroll, “Wine, Cheese ... and Trees.”

We have established an annual lecture focusing on great American gardens in recognition of the contributions of Lisina and Frank Hoch. As our inaugural speaker we welcome Bill Thomas, director of Chanticleer, a pleasure garden located in Wayne, Pennsylvania. Our annual David H. Smith memorial lecture will feature

Nantucket Land Council director Cormac Collier. He will discuss conservation and plant ecology on our neighboring island. (See box for information on a PHA-sponsored September trip to Nantucket.)

Other programs include staff-led tours, drawing classes, butterfly gardening, a woven willow workshop, and two afternoon author talks and receptions: Judith Tankard will discuss her book, *Gertrude Jekyll and the Country House Garden*, and Holly Bellebuono will present her new book, *The Essential Herbal for Natural Health*. In August look for a special event with Peter Pap of Peter Pap Oriental Rugs. Pap will speak on the use of natural dyes and the depictions of flora in antique rugs, along with a trunk show and two-day rug sale. A portion of the proceeds of the sale will go to the Arboretum.

In September, landscape designer and teacher Laura Eisener will be on hand for our end-of-season plant sale. She will inspire us with her talk, “Four Season Gardening,” then later in the day present a workshop, “Designing with Trees.” And, finally, at the end of the season, we welcome PHA research assistant Melissa



The July 11 evening lecture features Nancy Ross Hugo, author of *Seeing Trees*.

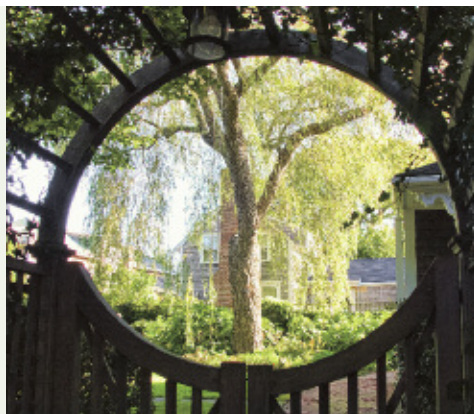
Cullina for another intensive two-day plant workshop, “Introduction to Grasses, Sedges, and Rushes.”

For our complete summer schedule look for our education brochure mailing or visit our education page at pollyhillarboretum.org. To receive email program updates contact Karin at karin@pollyhillarboretum.org. We thank our friends and sponsors—Bartlett Tree, Donaroma’s, Heather Gardens, Middletown Nursery, and SBS—for their generous support of our lecture series.

Touring with PHA

Encouraged by our successful garden tour of the Delaware Valley last spring, we are offering more group tours. This spring a PHA-sponsored group traveled to Belgium for a very special tour of seven exquisite gardens. The highlight was a visit to board member Philippe de Spoelberch’s private estate Herkenrode and his recently opened public garden Arboretum Wespelaar. More tours ahead.

Our next tour takes place on a (not so) faraway island: Martha’s Vineyard. Perhaps there are places here you have never seen! Hidden down dirt roads and behind stone walls are some spectacular gardens. On Tuesday, July 17, we will offer an exclusive one-day Martha’s Vineyard garden tour to visit four unique gardens. We begin with an intimate garden incorporating shrubs, grasses, and perennials



See the hidden street trees of Nantucket on our September tour.

(85 lavender plants!) on the shore zone at Oyster Pond, and travel next to a vibrant water garden carved out of the Chilmark woodlands. After lunch at PHA we’ll travel to Music Street to an enchanting formal garden set on Look’s Pond. We end our day at “The Folly” on Lambert’s Cove—this elaborate property features many gar-

dens set around an Italianate style villa. All gardens are sure to please.

Or, perhaps you’d like to island hop? On September 24–26 we are offering a two-day trip to Nantucket to explore the landscape and gardens of our island neighbor. We plan to stroll the cobblestone streets, visit several conservation properties, and tour a few private gardens. With assistance from our Nantucket Land Council colleagues, we will visit beaches, heathlands, ponds, bogs, and forests to learn about land preservation on Nantucket. Our trip will also include a walking tour with Nantucket’s tree warden to discover the historic legacy of the majestic street trees of downtown Nantucket.

To learn more about our garden tours, visit our website or call Karin at 508-693-9426.

Our Welcoming Center

The Visitor Center is the Arboretum's official public entrance. It is here that visitors get their first glimpse of our plant collections and their first greeting from our volunteers. There are maps, educational references, interpretive signs, orientation materials, restrooms, and a plant sale area, all set off by lovely plantings. It is truly a welcoming center.

Initially a woodland at the edge of the farm, this area was never intended to be a focal point. However, when the transition from a private garden to a public arboretum was made, it was decided that the public entrance should be located here to preserve the historic integrity of the core property. In 1998 when the Arboretum was opened to the public, visitors were greeted at our stunning new Visitor Center, constructed of glass, stone, copper, and eight different types of wood.

Nestled into the native woods, the



The Visitor Center terrace serves as a lush introduction to the Arboretum.

building has served us well over the years. Thousands of visitors have been warmly greeted and oriented for their visit through the arboretum. After a stroll through the grounds, many people linger to peruse our bookstore or to discover more information about a plant of interest. Outside on the stone terrace, under the pergola draped with woolly pipevine (*Aristolochia tomentosa*), tour groups meet and school children gather for the start of their fieldtrip. Others enjoy just sitting back and gazing into the garden.

The view from the terrace has changed over the years. The woodland area beyond the wall, originally called Holly Park by

Polly, has been expanded. Winter-hazel, enkianthus, hydrangea, and a variety of groundcovers were added to the oaks, hollies, and rhododendrons to create this attractive garden. These improvements were made possible through a generous donation from James Luther in memory of his wife, Hilly; since then it has been known as Hilly's Garden. This beautiful, layered woodland garden is an inviting introduction to the Arboretum offering an easy stroll for those unable to walk our entire grounds.

The next time you visit, linger a bit longer at the Visitor Center, and experience our welcome!

Weather or Not?

Reflecting on the "winter that wasn't," it is challenging to understand what is going on with our climate and the plants that endure it, or to know how we (PHA) should respond. Whether people are growing plants for food, or ornament, or are interested in the natural areas that surround them, the heat energy from the sun drives our seasonal changes and weather patterns.

One factor that affects the growth and survival of plants is seasonal maximum and minimum temperatures. The most critical factor for temperate plants being the minimum (coldest) temperatures reached on a year-by-year basis. The earliest attempt at

zone maps using weather data depicting and predicting hardiness (where plants might survive) was developed by renowned horticulturist Alfred Rehder in 1927 at the Arnold Arboretum. This map was revised and expanded upon by Donald Wyman, another famed horticulturist from the Arnold, in 1940.

In 1960, the USDA produced their own standardized Plant Zone Hardiness Map and updated it in subsequent years. The map was last revised in 2012. Each zone represents the average annual extreme minimum temperature for an area, reflecting the temperatures recorded for each of the

years from 1976–2005. For PHA the change is that we are now in USDA Zone 7b instead of Zone 7a as depicted in the 1990 map. The new online interactive map is available at planthardiness.ars.usda.gov.

Will the new map prove to be the decisive guide to growing plants on Martha's Vineyard? No! There are too many other factors that play a part in the success or failure of a plant; local conditions such as exposure, humidity, and soils are just a few.

PHA is committed to recording weather and plant growth statistics. We are looking for help in purchasing and setting up a weather station for the on-site recording of local weather data. Imagine a system where you can turn on your computer or smartphone and access the weather conditions at the PHA anytime! This recording equipment will record and display data on an hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year-to-year basis. The weather data from this new equipment will form a chronological recording of weather (and climate) now and into the future.

Arboretum Wish List

- \$ 800 Davis Vantage Pro2 Weather Station
- + \$ 500 WeatherLink Data Logger and Software
- + \$ 200 Labor: Install and Set-up

- = \$1500 Total Cost of Weather Station

If you would like to contribute to the purchase of this equipment, please call Barbara or Tim at 508-693-9426. We extend our sincere thanks to those of you who have generously responded to our previous requests.

Meeting Broom Crowberry for the Very First Time

by Tom Clark

Despite my abiding passion for plants, there are scores for which I have no memory of making their acquaintance; they just seeped into my consciousness. My introduction to others, however, stands out as some of my fondest memories: such is the case with broom crowberry (*Corema conradii*), one of the earliest Vineyard native plants to flower.

March and April are not ideal for exploring the wilds of Martha's Vineyard searching for plants in bloom, unless you're looking for skunk cabbage or red maple, or ... broom crowberry? The first two familiar plants present no challenge to the would-be

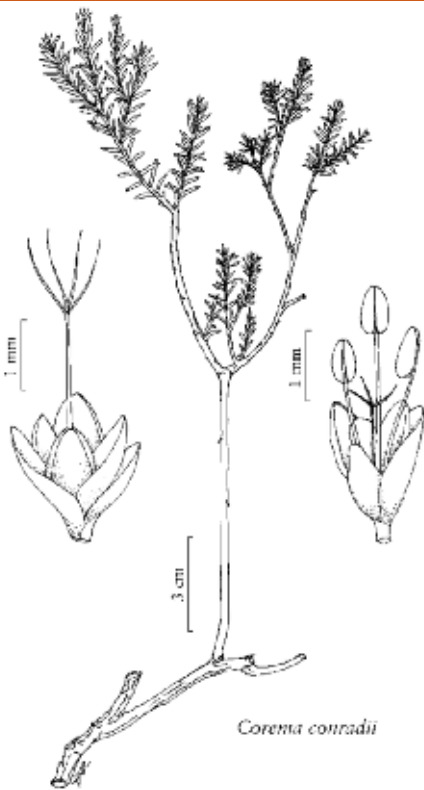
plant explorer but the latter can be exasperatingly difficult to track down. There are only five or six populations of this rare plant on the Island. It helps to have a car, a naturalist, and a map.

In early April of last year these three things came together. Kristen Fauteux of Sheriff's Meadow Foundation called to say *Corema* just might be in bloom—"Do you want to check it out?!" Tim and I, always keen for a botanical foray, replied with an enthusiastic "yes." Within the hour, the three of us were winding up a deeply rutted Chilmark track. After grading the last

stretch of "road" with the bottom of Tim's car, and following Kristen about 100 feet from where we parked, we arrived. The stunted oak forest atop this hill opened up to a hillside glade punctuated by a massive glacial erratic. At first glance, with the stunning view toward Vineyard Sound, the site looked spectacular yet unremarkable. On closer inspection, however, the ground-cover in the clearing was a magnificent tapestry of black huckleberry, mosses, reindeer lichen, black oak seedlings, and ... broom crowberry. And sure enough, it was in full bloom!

The minute blooms of broom crowberry appear in March most years on the Vineyard.





Corema conradii

Images courtesy of the *Flora of North America*

To appreciate the small purplish-red flowers that cluster at the tips of the branches requires inspection on hands and knees, which we gladly provided. Like hollies, broom crowberry plants are dioecious, bearing exclusively male flowers or female flowers. Pollination is likely affected by wind. As we explored that Chilmark hillside our footfalls stirred up clouds of pollen; perhaps some landed on receptive female flowers that would later produce tiny, three-seeded fruits. At only 12- to 18-inches tall with a wispy, tufted habit, broom crowberry is similar to several other sub-shrubby members of the heath family such as *Erica* (heath and heather), *Calluna* (heather), and *Empetrum* (crowberry). Broom crowberry's small, waxy, needlelike leaves enable poverty grass (another common name) to survive in poor, dry sites.

The overall range of this coastal species extends from Nova Scotia to New Jersey's Pine Barrens where broom crowberry was discovered and described in the mid-1800s. Within this broad range populations tend to be small, scattered, and generally restricted to dry, open, upland sites that are fire prone. Broom crowberry is well adapted to these sites. Fire not only promotes germination but also is a key factor in maintaining the open field habitat that *Corema* requires. Although there were no signs of

Map courtesy of the
Flora of North America



fire at the Chilmark population, the opening was clearly mowed suggesting that this may be an effective tool in maintaining suitable habitat. Without mowing the surrounding forest would overtake the site, shading and outcompeting the crowberry.

Broom crowberry has a precarious existence on the island but with judicious land management it will exist for years to come, as will my memory of that first encounter.

Open sandy ground is the preferred habitat for broom crowberry.





Delicate bell flowers of red-vein enkianthus



Red-vein enkianthus displaying brilliant fall color, Mt. Sanpokojin, Japan
Image courtesy of P. de Spoelberch



'Albiflorus' displays pure white blossoms.

Enkianthus: Belles of the Heath Family by Tom Clark

Charming flowers, vibrant fall color, obliging disposition, elegance admired by the most discerning gardeners: these are just some of the characteristics that recommend the genus *Enkianthus*. There are close to a dozen members of this Asian genus. Red-vein enkianthus (*Enkianthus campanulatus*) is the most frequently encountered in gardens, although even it is far from common. Hailing from mountainous parts of central and northern Japan, it is hardy and well-adapted to much of the

Northeast, including Martha's Vineyard.

The heath family (Ericaceae) is fertile ground for gardeners in search of choice trees and shrubs. Rhododendrons and azaleas come to mind: many make sensational statements in our gardens, gobs of spring color, but little else—a dramatic, one-dimensional display. Enkianthus are nowhere as theatrical; instead they put on an alluring, multi-dimensional performance that lasts all season long.

In mid-May when many ericaceous

plants are screaming “LOOK AT ME!” red-vein enkianthus whispers. It beckons you to appreciate its delicate flowers dangling in dense clusters. The background color of the small bell-shaped blossoms is typically creamy white to muted apricot-pink etched over with a fine detail of reddish veining, hence the common name. Once the blossoms are spent they don't merely shrivel up, they fall to the ground as intact bells carpeting the ground much like cherry blossoms.

Sofia Anthony

After the elegant bells drop, the developing seed capsules begin a complete turnaround. By fall, what started as downward-facing flowers are now skyward-facing chalice opening just as the seeds ripen. This botanical mechanism enables red-vein enkianthus, along with several other members of the heath family, to more efficiently disperse their seeds. At about the same time the foliage of red-vein enkianthus is turning color. Brilliant yellow and orange tones or stunning shades of reddish purple—the fall color can be spectacular!

The specimen that arches high over the Play Pen path at PHA is one of the largest in North America, measuring nearly 30 feet tall with an even greater spread. It's a treat to explain this to visitors and witness their amazement as we stroll *beneath* what most people know (if at all!) as a medium-sized shrub. In all fairness, our glorious specimen is an anomaly: a more typical height is 8-12 feet tall, and despite the broad spread of our decades-old plant, red-vein enkianthus tends to be taller than wide in its youth.

In recent years we have amassed quite a collection of species and cultivars at PHA. Four years after our 2007 plant exploration to Japan, seeds of *E. campanulatus* collected on that trip yielded several plants of flowering size. I was astonished when all bore rich red flowers announcing it as the botanical variety *palibinii*. Given enkianthus's adaptability to the Island climate and growing conditions we look forward to further evaluating the merits of enkianthus and sharing the subtle yet satisfying notes enkianthus brings to the garden.

Here on the Vineyard, our acidic, well-drained soils suit red-vein enkianthus well. In your own garden choose a partly shaded site or one with more sun, provided the site isn't particularly hot and dry. An added bonus is that deer seem to pass it by when sampling from our garden buffet. To find out more about the diversity within this wonderful genus, visit the PHA website at pollyhillarboretum.org/plants/enkianthus-2/ and follow the link to my article *Enkianthus in Cultivation*.

Sofia Anthony finds peace at the Arboretum. As soon as she enters the parking lot she gets that “ahhh” feeling. Sofia, who has been volunteering Saturday mornings in the Visitor Center for over ten years, just likes the soothing feel of the place.

As a Visitor Center volunteer she greets visitors with a smile, a map, and our “what's in bloom” guide. She encourages visitors to venture forth and explore. Sofia enjoys coming early to walk the grounds so she knows what is in bloom and is prepared to share any special information. She says part of the fun is helping visitors find answers to their questions after their tour; together they look through books and reference materials available at the Visitor Center.

Sofia, a retired physician, is a busy lady: she sings in the Island Community Chorus, serves as a member of the ethics committee at the Martha's Vineyard Hospital, calls bingo at Windemere Nursing Center, and volunteers for Hospice of Martha's Vineyard. We don't know how she finds the time to help us; we are just glad she does.

Sofia also loves to share Polly's story and how Polly, with an eye for aesthetics, had the ability to create more from the natural beauty of the land. She says, “You don't have to give people a ‘take home’ message; by being out here, they



Volunteer Sophia Anthony

get it—the plants, trees, flowers, birds—it's beautiful.” Sofia's enthusiasm and love of the arboretum are part of why the Polly Hill Arboretum is an uplifting place to visit.

At PHA we have a nationally recognized collection of shrubs and trees. However, it is our volunteers who make this collection accessible to the public. Grounds volunteers, school guides, tour docents, and visitor center volunteers are among our greatest assets, true ambassadors for all that the Arboretum offers to enrich our lives and community. The Visitor Center is staffed almost entirely by volunteers every day from Memorial Day thru Columbus Day!

Sofia encourages others to volunteer and feel that “ahhh” feeling for themselves. Please contact Nancy Weaver for more information on volunteering at the Arboretum.



'Summer Hill' one of the many new cultivars found in the PHA collections.

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



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PO Box 561
West Tisbury, MA 02575

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THEN & NOW

The Dogwood Allée



1961



2011

The Kousa Dogwood Allée, a side-by-side row planting of 28 kousa dogwoods (*Cornus kousa*), was planted in 1961. Since that time the dogwoods have grown to create an indelible land-

scape feature. Their stunning blooms burst forth in June, followed by impressive red fruits, and in winter their mottled bark and beautiful branching are spectacular. Year round

this allée (the French term for lane, walk, avenue, or drive) entices people to stroll down its path. However over the years all this foot traffic has taken its toll. In 2010 a group of

ten trees were treated with a procedure to lessen the impact of compacted soils. These trees responded beautifully; treatment of additional trees is planned for this fall.