

Meristems

The Polly Hill Arboretum
West Tisbury, Massachusetts

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Ilex opaca 'Villanova': a yellow-fruited American holly selected and named by Polly Hill.

Education Center Receives Matching Grant

PHA continues to grow at a measured pace. In 2006 the Arboretum outlined several capital projects to advance our mission of education, horticultural experimentation, and plant conservation. We have been successful with a new greenhouse (2006), the Cowbarn renovation (2007), the Littlefield Maintenance Building (2009), and a refurbished Far Barn (2011).

Today one significant project remains: the proposed Education Center and Botany Lab. We have completed plans for this building slated to replace the dilapidated outbuilding known as the Gym. The design was finalized last year by local architect Margaret Curtin. An education and science facility, this project embodies our mission to the fullest extent.

Situated at the heart of the Arboretum campus between the Homestead (our administrative offices) and the Cowbarn, the Education Center and Botany Lab will provide a climate-controlled indoor environment to extend our education programming year-round and the space and equipment to advance our plant research. Its central location is visible from State Road, making its design and positioning critical to maintaining the spirit of our historical landscape.

PHA staff and board of directors are committed to building this new facility as a natural extension of our education, research, and plant conservation mission. Polly Hill's emphasis on observing, documenting, and recording the unique

qualities of plants inspires our day-to-day work. Coupled with this is our desire to share our enthusiasm and knowledge of plants with a larger group of children and adults. The proposed building helps us accomplish all these goals.

Now the amazing news! PHA has received a \$500,000 gift from the Cedar Tree Foundation (the family foundation of our founder, Dr. David Smith) to raise matching funds for this new building. This generous grant supports our most important education and scientific building project to date. Our 2014 fall appeal has been sent to our entire membership with the hopes that all will recognize the impact of the Cedar Tree Foundation's grant. Please help make our vision a reality!

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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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Elevation design for the new Education Center and Botany Lab at Polly Hill Arboretum. Illustration by Margaret Curtin

Message from the Director

Energy and passion! That best describes the staff and volunteers of the Polly Hill Arboretum and provides the answer as to just how the Arboretum grows, thrives, and makes an impact in our community both near and far.

Within the confines of the Arboretum's stone walls, we welcomed three student interns last year and watched them grow in their plant knowledge while gaining a deeper understanding of this special public garden. Just down State Road we are completing the second stage of the landscape plantings at the expanded West Tisbury Library. And earlier in the season, we partnered with educator Kendra Buresch to develop a habitat garden of native plants at the Chilmark School. Further afield we participated in two successful seed-collection expeditions, one to the Ozark Region of Arkansas and another to the Southeast.

Last summer we welcomed Morton Arboretum president Dr. Gerard Donnelly to give the annual Frank and Lisina Hoch lecture. Gerry's talk focused on how climate change has brought serious challenges to the future health and welfare of plants, locally, regionally, and globally. Several of the challenges have not spared Martha's Vineyard,

particularly the escalation of plant pest problems and their dramatic impact on our native oaks. We are committed to studying local effects.

Locally our engagement with Cape and Island commercial arborists led to a day-long workshop provided by ArborMaster Inc., an arboricultural education organization that teaches the latest techniques in tree care management with an emphasis on safety. The Arboretum is a natural host for this type of activity. Our staff arborists had an opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues in this specialized field of tree maintenance and everyone learned safer practices.

Our energy and passion doesn't wane during the winter months. Our day-to-day activities will focus on our new Woodland Garden and Forest Ecology Trail (which is beginning to take shape) and our campaign to build a year-round education building, as well as planning our next season's programs. We welcome you to join us on one of our free winter walks. I hope to see you here!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Timothy M. Boland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line above the first name.

Summer Intern Report

This year's Feldman interns, Eva Colberg and Tessa Young, were beaming by summer's end. Both women felt some apprehension before coming sight unseen to Martha's Vineyard for an internship. But after their welcome into the PHA family, their concerns vanished. By the first week, they knew an amazing opportunity lay ahead.

The best part of Eva's first week happened between tasks when Curator Tom Clark said, "Let's go wander!" She explains, "He was talking about plant species, open to questions, willing to answer anything. I was amazed by the level of engagement."

After Tessa's first week, she realized she was working with people fanatic about plants. She clarifies, "We're eating lunch together, and people are *still* talking about plants. It's not just a job thing. It's something people are passionate about."

As the summer sped by, Eva and Tessa engaged in all aspects of the public garden experience while enjoying the mix of horticultural work. A highlight was their trip to the Woody Plant Conference at the Scott Arboretum in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, where they visited gardens, conversed with professionals, and discovered the range of opportunities found in

the world of public horticulture. By the end of the summer both felt excited about continuing their studies and exploring their future options.

Eva returns to her junior year at the College of William and Mary, beginning with a study abroad biodiversity and natural resources semester in Madagascar. Tessa begins her sophomore year at the University of Rhode Island. We wish both of these enthusiastic horticulturists much luck on their chosen paths. As always we heartily thank the Feldman family for their continuing support of the PHA summer internship program.



Collections management intern Amanda Wilkins and summer interns Eva Colberg (*middle*) and Tessa Young (*right*) enjoy a day at Chanticleer after attending the Woody Plant Conference in the Delaware Valley.

Seed Collecting Across the USA

PHA staff travel the world in search of seed! This year Curator Tom Clark, Executive Director Tim Boland, and Horticulturist Ian Jochems embarked on botanical road trips in the U.S.A.

In October Tom was on the road in Georgia and the Carolinas searching for seed of deciduous azalea species (a particular interest of Polly Hill's). The trip was underwritten by a \$2,500 grant from the American Rhododendron Society Research Foundation awarded to PHA to fund Tom's proposal. His collection efforts focused on increasing the genetic diversity in cultivation of three rhododendron species threatened in their native habitat: *Rhododendron eastmanii*, *flammeum*, and *vaseyi*. 47 collections were made on Tom's trip including some valuable "off-mission" seed of mountain stewartia. Tom was accompanied by Harold Sweetman, director of the Jenkins Arboretum in Devon, Pennsylvania. This collaboration forms the foundation for future trips to meet conservation goals set forth by the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

Also in October (prime month for seed collection), Tim and Ian participated in a seed collection trip to the Ozark Mountain Region of Arkansas. They collected seed of 34 different plants ranging from trees to herbaceous perennials. A few great finds were maple-leaved oak (*Quercus acerifolia*) and Ozark witch-hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*). The oak is listed as a threatened species with only an estimated 200 known living trees. In addition to Tim and Ian, the botanical team for the Ozark trip included Anthony Aiello, director of horticulture and curator at the Morris Arboretum, and Michael Dosmann, curator of living collections at the Arnold Arboretum.

The results of both these collaborative collecting trips allow us to assemble a stronger wild-origin plant collection at PHA while helping to preserve wild plant taxa, both in fulfilment of our mission. Look for the rest of the story next summer when Tom, Tim, and Ian present their botanical adventures in an evening lecture.



Botanist Brent Baker (left), Tim Boland (on tree), and Ian Jochems collect seed from a rare population of overcup oak in Saline County, Arkansas. Photo by Michael Dosmann

PHA receives VGCF Grant

In August PHA was awarded a grant from the Vineyard Golf Club Foundation (VGCF) to fund the purchase of a digital stereoscope. This \$1,800 microscope allows for the detailed observation of plants. In addition we will be easily able to identify insect and disease organisms allowing staff

to better manage the health of our plant collection. This gift also benefits our educational programs as digital images can be projected to an entire class and shared with teachers, students, and professional colleagues. We are thrilled with our new stereoscope! Thank you VGCF.

Erin Hefner Joins PHA Staff

Join us in welcoming our newest employee, Erin Hefner, who joined the Arboretum staff this past summer as Visitor Services & Resource Specialist. Erin will coordinate our volunteer program, manage the Visitor Center, and assist us with special projects including the expansion of our youth education program into the middle and high school grades.

Erin brings impressive educational qualifications as well as work experience in public gardens throughout the U.S. Prior to PHA she worked for the Trustees of Reservations as a seasonal horticulturist on Chappaquiddick Island. Erin earned a master's degree in sustainable landscape planning and design from the Conway School in Conway, Massachusetts. A native of Maine, Erin received her BS in horticulture from the University of Maine in Orono.



Erin Hefner

Erin came into the Arboretum fold last year as a special projects manager. She helped to formulate the on-line *Martha's Vineyard Plant Selection Guide* as well as develop and organize our herbarium collection. Her desire to work at PHA is based on her interest in connecting visitors to the beauty and science of our landscape. Executive Director Tim Boland adds, "Erin brings a broad skill set, a love of plants and people, and a strong work ethic to PHA. We are pleased to have her join our team!"

Farewell to Intern Amanda Wilkins

The same chilly winds blowing when Amanda Wilkins arrived at PHA in April were blowing again as she completed her collections management internship in late November. Between the seasons Amanda contributed to many facets of Arboretum operations while acquiring an appreciation for how a small public garden operates.

Amanda arrived with an eagerness to learn from every opportunity. Curator Tom Clark says she showed initiative right from the start. For example her interest in the wealth of daffodils scattered about the property. "The narcissus project (alias daffy-daze!) was driven by Amanda's interest and provided the perfect introduction to curation at PHA," says Tom. Through the work she discovered the challenges of maintaining plant records and gained experience with BG-Base (PHA's plant records database).

This and other curatorial ventures led Amanda deep into Polly Hill's original notebooks—a largely untapped wealth of observations, notes, and thoughts recorded by Polly for over 40 years. Recognizing

their tremendous value, Amanda developed protocols for transcription of the notebooks into a digital searchable format that could eventually provide easy access to this rich resource.

Her official curatorial project, the cornerstone of every collections management internship, focused on the Vegetable Field and entailed completing an inventory of the area, assessing the health and condition of each plant, and assisting to outline a management plan. However Amanda's evident impact can be seen throughout the Arboretum: plants propagated, tours led, living collection watered throughout the droughty summer (a huge job!), and much more, including her eager participation in our youth education program.

So what's next for this talented, energetic plantswoman? A bright future in the public garden world for certain—her immediate plans are focused on graduate school or a curatorial fellowship—but wherever the wind takes her, we wish her the best and thank her heartily for all she's done for PHA.

Gregory Palermo Named New PHA Research Associate

Dr. Gregory Palermo was appointed as a PHA Research Associate at the summer board meeting. A former medical researcher, Greg is a skilled naturalist, expert at collecting herbarium specimens and providing detailed notes for their documentation. He recently collected several new plants never before documented on Martha's Vineyard. A year-round Island resident, Greg is a member of the Martha's Vineyard Floristic Study Group, a team of Island naturalists contributing to an updated Flora of Martha's Vineyard. In addition to his work for the PHA, Greg participates in voluntary roles for Biodiversity Works, TNC, and Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. We are fortunate to have Greg's contributions to PHA and our conservation efforts.



Greg Palermo (left) and Executive Director Tim Boland collect plant specimens this past July on Nantucket Island.

Exciting New Job for Matt Lobdell

It's gratifying to watch former PHA interns thrive in the public garden field. Our most recent success story: Matthew Lobdell, born and raised on Martha's Vineyard, has accepted the position of head of collections and curator at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. The mission of the 1,700-acre Morton Arboretum is to collect and study trees, shrubs, and other plants from around the world. We are pleased to see Matt move into a position with one of the premier arboretums in the world. Congratulations Matt!

Board News

We are pleased to welcome Hunter Moorman to the PHA Board of Directors. Hunter learned of the Arboretum after retiring to Martha's Vineyard with his wife, Leslie Gray. He strengthened his connection through Leslie's dedication to our volunteer grounds crew, and most recently through his work with Executive Director Tim Boland on the West Tisbury Library's landscape subcommittee. As chairman of the West Tisbury Library Foundation, Hunter worked to raise private donations in support of the West Tisbury Library expansion project.

Hunter has a long history of working to support worthy goals. He is retired from the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., where for 26 years he directed national education development and school improvement programs. He also launched the department's principal school leadership improvement program,



Hunter Moorman

LEAD. After leaving the federal government, he spent nine years improving educational policy with the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C., and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France, as well as consulting with many universities, state and local governments, and non-profit organizations. Hunter has a certificate in organization development

from Georgetown University, an MPA from George Washington University, and BA in government from Harvard College.

Hunter is pleased to join our board, noting with characteristic eloquence, "I have long admired the Arboretum's collections, public outreach and education, and enduring spirit of horticultural experimentation. Just how valuable the Arboretum is as a community and Island resource has become especially clear through my recent involvement with the Arboretum's planting at the West Tisbury Library. I am thrilled at this opportunity to support the Arboretum and the work of its impressive staff."

Hunter brings his tremendous credentials and years of work as an advocate for important causes to PHA. As he embraces retirement in such an energetic style, we are thrilled to have Hunter on board as an advocate for PHA.

Staff News

The American Public Garden Association (APGA) continues to provide educational opportunities for PHA staff. In late June, Horticulturist Ian Jochems attended his first APGA annual meeting held in Denver, Colorado. He had a great experience connecting with enthusiastic public garden professionals and was also able to earn continuing education credits for his International Society of Arboriculture certification.

In September, Visitor Services & Resource Specialist Erin Hepfner attended APGA's Small Gardens Symposium, *Moving Your Garden Forward*, held in Youngstown, Ohio. Her focus was on strengthening PHA's guest services and volunteer programs. Based on the positive reaction from participants from over 30 states, Erin felt proud to represent the Polly Hill Arboretum.

In October Education & Outreach Coordinator Karin Stanley attended APGA's *Historic Landscapes Symposium* held at the Winterthur Museum and Gardens in Delaware. The seminars focused on

strategies of stewardship and interpretation at public gardens with landscapes defined by multiple narratives laid down over time. Karin returned inspired to better interpret the layers of history at PHA.

And finally, in November, collections management intern Amanda Wilkins attended APGA's *Advancing Plant Collections Management* hosted by the Smithsonian Gardens in Washington, D.C. This symposium provided insight into developing meaningful collaborations, finding innovative ways of connecting people to collections, and curating collections to maintain relevance to an institution's mission. Amanda presented a poster detailing her PHA curatorial project.

In other staff news Executive Director Tim Boland gave a lecture, "Oak Diversity of the Cape and Islands," as part of the Citizen Science Weekend sponsored by the Nantucket Biodiversity Initiative last summer. On the same trip, joined by new PHA Research Associate Greg Palermo, Tim had a chance to botanize on adjacent Tuckernuck Island.

ArborMaster Provides Training at PHA

This year we held our first on-site ArborMaster training program at PHA. The emphasis was work safety, new technology, and chainsaw handling.

ArborMaster is an organization committed to providing hands-on skills and safety training to people and organizations that work in and around trees. ArborMaster president Ken Palmer presented a morning lecture in the Far Barn followed by an afternoon of field demonstrations on the grounds. His lecture exposed critical safety issues in the tree industry. Though most of the 30 participants were professional arborists from around the Cape and Islands, several PHA volunteers also attended. As a result of the positive response, we plan to host more safety-training seminars in the future in a concerted effort to make local practices safer.

Travelling Exhibit Visits PHA

Visit PHA this spring for a special outdoor exhibit, *Vanishing Acts: Trees Under Threat*. Developed by the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, this interpretive exhibit is travelling across the country sharing its important message about the world's endangered trees and how we can protect them.

The exhibit will take you on a global journey, exploring compelling tree stories from around the world. Displayed on 15 panels, each story reflects the exhibit's primary theme—we must protect and save endangered trees so future generations may experience their numerous benefits. Learn about at-risk trees and the forces that threaten them, including overexploitation,



Exhibit panels from *Vanishing Acts*

land-use changes, invasive species, climate change, and pollution. Many of the threatened trees are planted here at PHA.

This self-guided tour offers an important educational message for all ages: the trees we know and love are endangered in the wild; by protecting them, we help

ourselves and the entire planet. We plan to share coordinated lesson plans (grades K-12) with local teachers and expect an increase in fieldtrips and student visits this spring. *Vanishing Acts* will be on view at the Arboretum from March 1 through June 28. Watch for special programming.

Arboretum Launches New Plant Selection Website

Are you familiar with this nearly impossible site: dry, shady, north-facing corner—grass won't grow, but weeds will? Could other plants grow there? You imagine an attractive low shrub, one that won't block the window, perhaps an Island native. Are you asking the impossible?

Not any longer . . . the *Martha's Vineyard Plant Selection Guide*, a searchable website developed by PHA, reveals three options for this tricky situation: black huckleberry, hillside blueberry, sheep laurel.

The Arboretum developed this website (with support from the Martha's Vineyard Commission) to help residents and organizations on Martha's Vineyard make smart plant choices for their gardens and landscapes. Searches based on site conditions, plant type, and plant characteristics, as well as native regions and Martha's Vineyard plant designations will result in a personal-

ized plant list with suggestions that not only meet your needs, but also preserve the unique ecosystems of Martha's Vineyard.

This dynamic website, compiled by PHA Resource Specialist Erin Hepfner and designed by Martha's Vineyard Online (MVOL), can easily be updated as we continue to study plant performance or with personal observations from you. We will continually add new photos of the 964 plants on the website. Our goal is to serve the community with relevant and accessible plant information. As we learn more, we will share the most up-to-date information.

A large native tree well suited for urban use and tolerant of salt spray? A fragrant North American native perennial known for attracting wildlife? Enjoy searching for plant ideas that match with your site conditions and desired traits. The planting possibilities are endless!

Find the *MV Plant Selection Guide* website at plantfinder.pollyhillarboretum.org. We look forward to your feedback.



Home page of the *Martha's Vineyard Plant Selection Guide*

Arboretum Wish List

Interpretive Signage – \$1,000

There are areas on our grounds with historical and horticultural significance we would like to interpret for visitors. Polly's old nursery is one. This small interpretive panel will tell the story of the old nursery and include a historic photo of Polly at work.

If you would like to contribute to the design and purchase of signage to interpret Polly's original nursery, please call Barbara Conroy or Tim Boland at 508-693-9426. We extend our gratitude to those of you who have responded to our previous requests.

Conversation Starter: Big-Leaf Magnolia

by
Amanda Wilkins

Beaded raindrops glisten on the leaves of big-leaf magnolia, the largest of any native temperate North American tree.

The robust silhouette of the Julian Hill magnolia billows over the stone wall wowing passersby with its tropical physique. There hasn't been a week during my time at PHA when I didn't get questions about this magnificent big-leaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) from visitors wandering the grounds. It's hard to contain my excitement when people look up with astonishment, in one glance acquiring a sincere curiosity about plants.

I first met this amazing tree during a chance trip to the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. I was captivated by the large leaves borne above me and the

branches swooping over the path. Little did I know, I'd been driving by them most of my life! Gaston County, the county I grew up in, has the largest population of big-leaf magnolia in the state of North Carolina. It was also where in 1789 French botanist Andre Michaux first found and described the species botanically, introducing this tree to the world.

A frequent question is *Where does it grow?* Most people are surprised to learn this tree is native to the Deep South. In fact most of its range is in Louisiana and Mississippi, and one can find it in Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia. There

are also disjunct populations in several other southern states as well as surprising reports of populations in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Despite its extensive range, it is uncommon throughout.

PHA's Julian Hill magnolia is a stately, pyramidal specimen, now more than 60' tall. Wide, graceful branches support umbrellalike tufts of gigantic leaves at their tips. In the wild, *M. macrophylla* grows to be 20-50' tall, appearing as an open-growing understory tree where it receives filtered light and shelter from the wind. It is frequently found in moist hardwood forests west of the Blue Ridge Mountains growing in steep ravines together with American beech.

Big-leaf magnolia is an apt common name, for this stunning native tree has the largest simple leaf of any species in North America. Its enormous leaves are often close to 3' long and 8-10" wide. When a breeze catches the kite-sized leaves, the chalky-white undersides are revealed creating another level of interest. In addition the smooth, light gray bark, easily overlooked in the summer, shines like silver in the cooler months. And the large, fuzzy vegetative buds gleam as well, making the tree resemble a shining candelabrum. This tree incites interest in all seasons.

The most common question visitors ask is *When does it flower?* But it's the how, not the when, that is most impressive. *Magnolia macrophylla* possesses the largest flower of any tree in North America, or any magnolia species in the world. The creamy white, six-parted flowers can be 12-20" wide, making even the largest grown-up feel small. In the South it blooms as early as April, but if you want to catch a glimpse of the flowers at PHA, try mid- to late June. This year peak bloom was during the week of June 17.

After flowering, the purplish-pink seedpods begin to swell. People sometimes confuse them for flower buds. Botanically what resembles cones are actually an aggregate fruit. In early October podlike follicles break open to reveal seeds covered with a salmon-pink aril. The seeds hang by a thin, but surprisingly sturdy, thread and later drop to the ground (if not eaten by birds). Also in the fall, leaf drop can be a shocking



Seeds “ooze” from the cone-like aggregate fruit of big-leaf magnolia in October.



The volleyball-size flowers of big-leaf magnolia are the largest of any native temperate North American tree.

surprise. The large leaves cover the ground adding new meaning to the term “leaf litter.”

The seed that eventually produced our Julian Hill magnolia came from nurseryman William Phelps in 1960, most likely from a tree on his estate in Guyencourt, Delaware. Polly received one “cone” of seed and sowed them outdoors in her nursery. Eight seedlings survived and she planted one along the east wall in the Arboretum in 1963. It succumbed to mouse girdling. She replaced it in 1964 with the plant we talk about today.

Polly named her big-leaf magnolia after her husband, Julian Hill. She was known for naming plants after members of her family. The oft-told story goes that Julian didn’t want a little, frilly, pink flower as a namesake, so in 1982 Polly chose what happens to be one of the largest white flowers in North America. *M. macrophylla* ‘Julian Hill’ was officially recognized as a cultivar by the Magnolia Society in 1984.

Some horticultural literature downplays the use of big-leaf magnolia: it is messy in the fall, susceptible to wind, and purportedly short-lived (Forty years seems to be all anyone’s expecting.) But fortunately, plants don’t read books! Julian Hill has survived the winds of the Vineyard for more than 50 years, and he is not giving any indication of giving up. If you have a spacious, sheltered spot in your yard in need of an interesting tree, look no further. Few plants are better conversation starters than big-leaf magnolia.



The tropical look of big-leaf magnolia makes it one of the most sought out trees at PHA.

Island Holly Haunts

by Tom Clark

Ambling through the mostly leafless landscape of Middle Line Woods Preserve on an abnormally warm, foggy December day, a menacing army of dark figures appears on the hillside above. I pause in my tracks. The swirling mists and wind give life to the approaching forms. Cautiously I creep forward. As the shadowy shapes come into focus, I chuckle at my irrational sense of foreboding. This was my first Island encounter with our most unmistakable native tree—American holly (*Ilex opaca*).

American holly is the only broad-leaved evergreen tree native to Martha's Vineyard, which alone sets it apart from any other native plant. It is not the only native holly however; two shrubby species, inkberry (*I. glabra*) and the winterberry (*I. verticillata*), also occur here. Despite its association with Christmas and the winter season, hollies are a cosmopolitan lot with more than 800 species found growing worldwide, most occurring in tropical and sub-tropical regions.

Regardless of species or native range, all hollies share a unique adaptation that ensures, in fact demands, cross-pollination. They are the most familiar example of a plant that is dioecious, which means that each individual plant has either all female flowers (that bear fruit) or all male flowers (that bear pollen). If pollination is successful, female plants produce fruits that, in the case of American holly, ripen starting in October. The small red fruits ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter) stand out like jewels amidst the dark leathery foliage.

To the gardener, the fruits (often called berries, but not technically a berry) are a welcome addition to the fall and winter garden, but they are also an indispensable food for many birds. Birds appear to zero in on individual plants at different times during the winter. I've observed flocks of American robins or cedar waxwings devouring the fruit on one plant while nearby another American holly that (to my non-birdbrain) looks just as ripe, is virtually ignored. Perhaps there is “no



A snow-capped American holly: a sharp contrast to the fact that many hollies are native to tropical and subtropical parts of the world.



Bright red fruits on a female American holly enliven the fall and winter landscape.



The pyramidal form of American holly stands out amidst native white and black oaks.

accounting for taste” or perhaps the fruits differentially reach an acceptable stage of palatability.

Polly Hill selected and named four forms of American holly, doing her part to contribute to the hundreds of cultivars selected from this wide-ranging species native to much of the eastern half of the U.S. As a garden subject American holly has much to offer in terms of ornamental attributes and finds wide application as a specimen plant, understory tree, screen planting, hedge or foundation planting. When thoughtfully sited in well-drained soil, avoiding the most exposed locations, few problems arise.

Despite eight years of familiarity with their presence, it is still a novelty to tramp our up-Island woodlands (in Chilmark particularly) and happen upon the loose pyramids of year-round leafiness that are American hollies. Morainal uplands in moist but well-drained soil seem to suit it best. On such sites they fill an understory role among black and white oak, beech, sassafras, and even beetlebung and red maple where the ground is not continuously wet—a condition American holly abhors. Whorls of branches clad with the spiny-toothed, dark green leaves radiate from the ashen, elephantine trunks that emerge from a thicket of black huckleberry, dangleberry, sheep laurel, and the ubiquitous bull-briar. The same atmospheric landscape is frequently dotted with the hulking granite erratics dropped from the receding edge of the glaciers many thousands of years ago.

Janet Holladay

Janet Holladay is a busy woman. Despite a full-time job as a graphic designer—we can thank her for our education brochure design—she finds time during her workday to volunteer at PHA. Janet brings enthusiasm and wide-eyed wonder for nature. “No matter what season there is something amazing to see,” she exclaims. “Really! Purple berries in the fall and yellow-berried hollies and plants that bloom in winter!”

Originally from Columbus, Ohio, Janet came East to study art history at Smith College. She visited Martha’s Vineyard one summer and never left—a familiar story for many year-round residents. For the past 30 years she has been a graphic designer at the Tisbury Printer in Vineyard Haven. A woman of diverse talents and lively interests, she somehow found time to attend Harvard Divinity School, earning not one, but two, master’s degrees in theology, and she also maintains an active interest in swing dancing.

Janet first became involved with the Arboretum on opening day in 1998. As soon as she heard Polly’s garden

would be open to the public, she was there, signing up to be a guide. She finds leading adult tours enjoyable, and easy too. Janet says the place speaks for itself: “The plants and grounds help tell the stories. Just let people walk and absorb what they see.”

When we expanded into youth education programs she eagerly became a school guide volunteer. Janet especially enjoys outdoor education and worked at Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary in the 1970s where she continues to lead programs as a teacher/naturalist. She loves watching students interact with nature. “It’s so important for the kids, and everyone, to be outside,” she adds. With the inquiry method used in our fieldtrips—asking questions of the students—Janet finds that everyone learns, even the adults, and often from the kids, who know a surprising amount.

For Janet, volunteering at Polly Hill is fun and gratifying, and also an opportunity to be outside. If you need a reason to be outside, volunteering at PHA will help you meet that goal. We need your help. To learn more about becoming a volunteer, contact PHA at 508-693-9426.



Janet Holladay

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: 10 am 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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THEN & NOW

Old Nursery, New Life

Polly Hill planted her first seeds in 1958 after preparing a nursery bed in an area that had previously been an apple orchard. A cover of lath fencing provided needed shade. Over the years Polly used this nursery for raising plants from seed and as a home for small divisions. Many rare trees now on the grounds got their start here.

With the development of the Littlefield Nursery, we now have ample growing space. However this little piece of ground has cultural (and horticultural!) significance. We will preserve the small nursery and continue to direct sow seed. The old-but-new nursery has been reduced in size to accommodate the nearby Julian Hill magnolia, and the fence rebuilt using black locust wood harvested on-site.

Our intentions are in sync with Polly's practice of direct sowing woody plant seed with complex dormancy requirements outside in the elements, and waiting patiently for results. Sometimes Nature best determines which seeds will grow and thrive, and that's worth waiting for.

If you are interested in assisting with interpretation in this area, see the *Arboretum Wish List* on page 7.



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