



*Styrax grandiflorus*

## Ozark Seed Expedition Planned for the Fall

As part of our continued quest to grow plants from seed collected in the wild, PHA staff will join colleagues from the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania on a seed collection trip to the Ozark Mountains this fall. The Ozark flora is rich with endemic species unique to the region, plants that have tremendous horticultural potential. Distinct for its geology where the coastal plain meets the interior mountains of the Ozark Plateau, the area is punctuated with spectacular river valleys containing a diverse and rich flora.

Last spring PHA Executive Director Tim Boland joined Greg Paige, curator of the Bartlett Arboretum in Charlotte, North

Carolina, and Andrew Bunting, curator of the Scott Arboretum in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, for a scouting expedition of the region. Hiking through rugged terrain with spectacular views, this expert botanical team located several plants in flower and confirmed their identity for a follow-up return to collect seed this fall.

In October our plant explorers will meet in Little Rock, Arkansas, and move to the interior mountain ranges including Mount Magazine State Park in the heart of the Ouachita Mountains. The park contains 14 miles of hiking trails through a diversity of habitats and the highest point in Arkansas, Signal Hill at 2,753 feet. The Ozark forest is home to over 500

species of trees and other woody plants. Hardwood species like oaks and hickories are common forest elements as well as a diversity of understory plants, many familiar to home gardeners.

Targeted plants include the fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), which Tim came across in full bloom as the reconnaissance team hiked in Petit Jean State Park, a remarkable 3,471-acre park in central Arkansas; and the highly prized vernal witch-hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*). We hope to find seed of both and many other plants. As a result, there will be seedlings in the greenhouse and, ultimately, new plants in our collection from this exciting expedition.

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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.

*Meristems* © The Newsletter of the Polly Hill Arboretum

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The new Collections Garden will feature wooded trails and a beech ring.

## Message from the Director

It's spring at last! We can all say a grateful collective goodbye to this past icy winter. While we complained about the cold, perhaps it's because we have acclimated to a new norm that has been too warm. Indeed our island, and our world in general, are facing biological repercussions from a changing climate. A walk through the PHA woodlands serves as a stark reminder of the caterpillar invasion that caused wide-scale mortality where several dead trees still stand. Regrowth at ground level is cause for hope. While our forest slowly recovers, a new challenge is the cynipid wasp that has infected some of our largest black oaks. We are cautiously optimistic that the worst of this new insect invasion is behind us.

As many of you know we are working at a measured pace to create a new woodland garden area for future collections expansion. This past winter we met again with site planners Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc. Through these meetings an exciting idea emerged: opening our western woodlands and linking them to the collections expansion garden. Over the next year we plan to draw upon the expertise of Michael's

group in combination with the insights of PHA research associate Dr. David Foster to create a broader, more comprehensive plan that will revitalize our woodland trails. It's an opportunity to allow Arboretum visitors to read the story of the forested landscape, an enduring cyclic process demonstrating the resiliency of nature. Along these trails are numerous interpretive opportunities to explain past human/cultural influence on the forest. These interactions along with the botanical, topographical, and geological diversity of the site will combine for a richer visitor experience.

Along with all of these new plans and developments comes new plantings, education programs, and college interns joining us for another vibrant growing season as well as the on-going maintenance and curation of our collection. Please make a special effort to visit the Arboretum this season. Bring your friends or consider becoming a volunteer. We look forward to seeing you!



## Meet Amanda Wilkins

We welcomed our new collections management intern Amanda Wilkins in mid-April, weeks after what we thought would be our last glimpse of snow. However, as luck (and our ever-changing weather!) would have it, snow fell on her third day, making the journey from North Carolina like a trip back in time. She took it in stride, enjoyed a second spring and quickly adapted to our quirky climate.

Amanda graduated with a BS in horticulture science from North Carolina State University. We were all amazed by the extensive list of jobs, internships, honors, and volunteer activities that she packed into the past five years. Internships at Duke Gardens, the National Tropical Botanical Garden, and Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, student teaching appointments, and hundreds of volunteer hours for dozens of organizations begin to give you a sense of Amanda's energy level. *And* she graduated magna cum laude!

In her first few days at PHA she exhibited that same level of enthusiasm, dedication, and engagement. We all look forward to many months of working with Amanda. Here's hoping we can keep up with her!



Amanda Wilkins, PHA collections management intern

## A Fond Farewell and Many Thanks to Nancy Weaver

After a continuing presence for 18 years at PHA, Nancy Weaver is stepping down from her position of Volunteer Coordinator & Plant Recorder. Nancy's dedication and knowledge will be missed. Executive Director Tim Boland says, "Nancy has been with us from our very origins. Her ability to connect people with the Arboretum's mission, messages, and stories is irreplaceable."

Nancy began her Arboretum tenure as a volunteer. After meeting Polly Hill at a Vineyard Conservation Society garden party, she began volunteering at what was then called Barnard's Inn Farm. She assisted on the grounds and served as an

impromptu guide for visitors before the property was opened to the public.

In July of 1997, Nancy became the Horticultural Supervisor of the newly created Polly Hill Arboretum. Over the years her work has evolved to include a wide range of activities: mentoring interns and overseeing gardeners, mapping the grounds, collecting data on tree measurements, and keeping track of our plant records among them.

Nancy is best known for overseeing the Visitor Center and managing our successful ever-growing volunteer program. In 1998 she orchestrated the tours for opening day, establishing a lasting relation-

ship with many volunteers who remain with us to this day. Her ongoing guide training program for new and returning docents and annual volunteer thank-you party has made volunteering at PHA a rewarding "growth" experience. Tim adds, "So many people have been introduced to and inspired by the Arboretum through our volunteer program. We will do our very best to maintain the collegial family atmosphere that Nancy established."

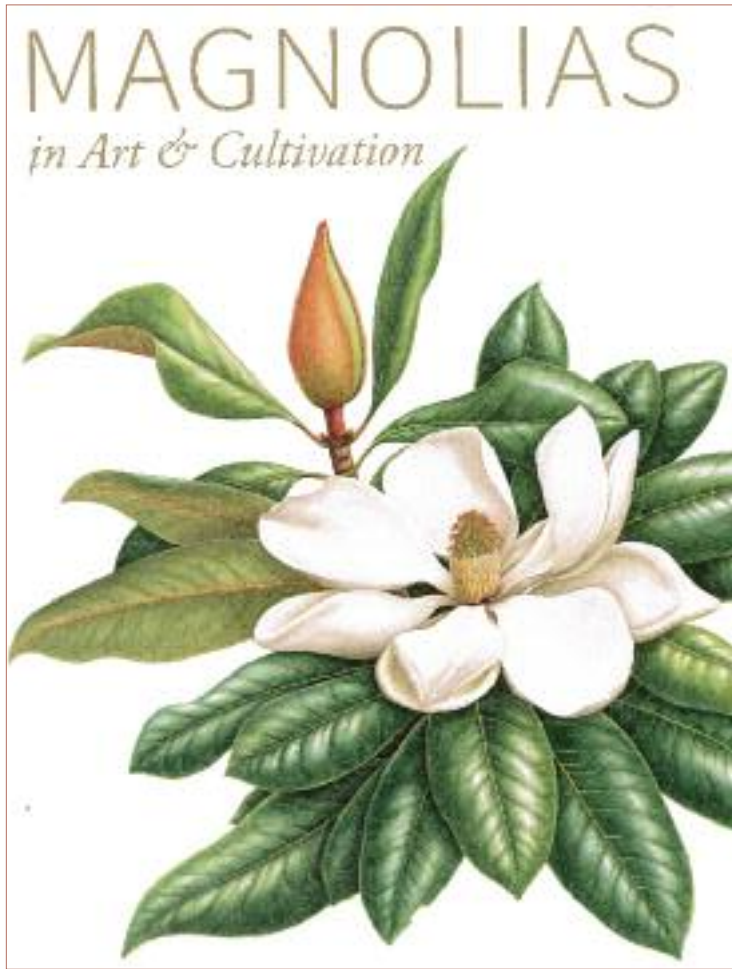
We all wish Nancy well in her new endeavors and hope she will continue to stay involved with PHA. Perhaps we can convince her to come full circle and . . . volunteer!

## Magnolias in Art and Cultivation

PHA director emeritus and honorary board member Stephen A. Spongberg has collaborated on a wonderful new book, *Magnolias in Art and Cultivation*. Steve, a renowned taxonomist with a special interest in the

genus *Magnolia*, provides detailed botanical descriptions of the species illustrated in the book. The trees are painted in striking authenticity by botanical artist Barbara Oozeerally. Informative text by plantsman

Jim Gardiner provides additional information on each magnolia. The book was published in 2014 by Kew Publishing in association with the Royal Horticultural Society. Look for it in the PHA library.



*Magnolia acuminata* by Barbara Oozeerally

## Welcome Interns from Near and Far

People often ask us what we do during the winter. “Try to stay warm” was the cheeky go-to answer this past winter, but we also found time to sort through 36 applications for our summer internship program from students in 20 states. This year’s summer interns come from states that could scarcely be farther apart or more different in size. Tessa Young is from just a hop away in tiny Rhode Island. Eva Colberg is from a hop and a skip—and then some—away in the massive state of Alaska.

Eva is a sophomore at the College of William & Mary studying biology and environmental policy. She is eager to spend the summer gaining first-hand experience and practical plant care knowledge. She feels this internship will be “the perfect next step” in a career path towards working with plants.

Tessa is equally enthusiastic to be afforded an opportunity to broaden her horizons beyond the classroom and build on her work experience at a

commercial greenhouse. She is completing her first year as a plant science major at the University of Rhode Island where she is actively involved with the horticulture club.

Please join us in welcoming Eva and Tessa. We look forward to providing them with a meaningful experience. As always we extend our profound thanks to the Feldman family for their long-time interest in and support of this valuable and vital program.



## Staff News

In January Senior Horticulturist/Arborist Steve Masterson and Horticulturist Ian Jochems attended a training workshop for the Sentinel Plant Network (SPN) hosted at Garden in the Woods in Framingham, Massachusetts. Our continued involvement in SPN gives PHA access to training and diagnostic support to better monitor the health of our living collection and better educate the community in the detection and diagnosis of potentially devastating pests and pathogens.

Also in January, Curator Tom Clark presented a talk about PHA and participated in a panel discussion at the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association's winter meeting.

In March Steve Masterson attended a three-day International Society of

Arboriculture in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The workshop focused on assessing the health and structural integrity of trees with a particular focus on identifying hazardous trees.

Executive Director Tim Boland gave the Copeland Lecture at the Mt. Cuba Center in Hockessin, Delaware, in February. Tim's talk featured PHA's native plant production program MV Wildtype. The Copeland Lecture was established to bring an outstanding speaker to the Delaware community to inspire and motivate environmentally-informed stewardship and land conservation.

Tim gave two talks in April on American oaks. One, held at the Cambridge Public Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was part of "Evenings with

Experts," a program sponsored by Grow Native Massachusetts, a not-for-profit that encourages the planting of native plants for wildlife habitat enhancement in urban areas. He later presented the same talk at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, Massachusetts.

Tim went back to his Morton Arboretum roots to prepare a talk titled "Trees are the Answer!" for Friends of Trees in Chatham, Massachusetts. The presentation features the story of Arbor Day (founded by J. Sterling Morton) and explains the value of trees in our local communities and in the world. He repeated the talk on Arbor Day at PHA. In addition Tim was invited to join the Living Collections Advisory Board of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.



## Farm Neck Grant Aids Grounds Maintenance Tasks

In November PHA was awarded a grant from the Farm Neck Foundation to fund the purchase of a STIHL KombiSystem. With this system a handheld motor can be fitted with up to 14 interchangeable attachments for accomplishing grounds maintenance tasks including cutting brush,

pruning, edging beds, and cultivating. Each year the Farm Neck Foundation provides thousands of dollars in grant money to Vineyard non-profit organizations to strengthen the positive impact of their work. PHA is grateful for their support.

## Arboretum Wish List

### Garden Benches – \$550 each

We would like two more benches for our grounds. They provide a spot for visitors to rest but are also used by school groups as a place to gather, listen, and draw during fieldtrips. Benches will be sustainably harvested teak.

### Digital Dissecting Microscope – \$450

This microscope will be useful for teaching plant identification and plant morphology. Connectivity to a computer aids in explanation of what is being observed. This is also an essential tool for accurately identifying insects enabling us to better manage the living collection.

If you would like to contribute to the purchase of a microscope or garden furniture, please call Barbara Conroy or Tim Boland at 508-693-9426. We extend our gratitude to those of you have responded to our previous requests.



## Summer Program Preview

Photo: Robert Llewellyn

This year we welcome several notable speakers for our summer lecture series. In early July author Teri Dunn Chace shares fascinating tales on the extraordinary close-up floral images by Robert Llewellyn from her book, *Seeing Flowers*. Later in the month plantsmen Andrew Bunting and Scott McMahan take us on a plant collecting tour in their talk, “A Plant Pilgrimage to Taiwan and Vietnam.” Learn about their search for rare plants including *Rhododendron nakabarae*, a parent plant of Polly Hill’s North Tisbury azaleas. Closer to home, Eric Rutkow traces the history of the United States through trees in a talk based on his book, *American Canopy: Trees, Forests, and the Making of a Nation*.

This year’s Frank and Lisina Hoch lecture features Dr. Gerard Donnelly, director of the Morton Arboretum, presenting “The Relevance of Botanical Gardens in a Changing World” and sharing insights on the impact of public gardens on people and their communities. Discover how the Morton Arboretum works to plant and save trees for a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world.

For our annual David H. Smith Memorial lecture we welcome Buddy Huffaker, president of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. His talk, “Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic: Past, Present, and Future,” will present Leopold’s journey to ecological awakening and his seminal work, *A Sand County Almanac*. Huffaker will discuss the current and future challenges for true sustainability and lead the audience through an exercise to help us develop our own land ethic.

In July we tackle two pesky subjects: invasive plants and deer browsing. Teri Dunn Chace will discuss invasive plants in a talk based on her book, *How to Eradicate Invasive Plants*. And defensive tactics to hold deer at bay will be addressed by garden designer and writer Kerry Ann Mendez in an informative talk including info on plants that are unappealing to deer. PHA staff will be on hand to describe methods used on the PHA grounds to combat both of these problems.

September brings our fall plant sale and a talk by ecological landscape designer Michael Talbot on creating and managing

landscapes in harmony with the Vineyard’s fragile environment. In addition, author, botanist, and teacher Arthur Haines returns for more wild plant foraging and a special workshop on gathering and preparing acorns for food.

Other programs include the return of our popular herbal salve and tea blending workshops, a series of drawing classes, and the Edgartown Tree Tour. And for an in-depth study of Island plants and their habitats, we welcome back Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation’s director of stewardship Kristen Fauteux and MV Land Bank ecologist Julie Russell. This time they will investigate the Island’s sandplains and heathlands.

For our complete summer schedule look for our education brochure mailing or visit our education page at [pollhillarboretum.org](http://pollhillarboretum.org). To receive email program updates, contact Karin at [karin@pollyhillarboretum.org](mailto:karin@pollyhillarboretum.org). We thank our friends and sponsors—Bartlett Tree Experts, Donaroma’s, Heather Gardens, Middletown Nursery, and SBS: The Grain Store—for their generous support of our lecture series.



## Youth Education Collaborations

We take great pride in the success of our youth education program, which reaches over 1,000 students each school year; however we don't stop there, we continue to explore ways to increase our value as a plant education resource for the community. We have recently initiated programs to collaborate with other Island organizations on bringing more plant-based education into Island schools.

One such group is Island Grown Schools (IGS), a program of Island Grown Initiative. Through their school garden program, IGS seeks to teach children the value of growing food and healthy eating choices while deepening their connection to the environment. Together PHA and IGS have identified overlapping units in our curricula—our lessons on seeds!—and have worked to augment each other's programming to benefit the students' learning experiences.

In addition we will participate in Island Grown School's two-day "seed curriculum" teacher training workshop this summer. This workshop will familiarize



Youth Education Coordinator Betsy Dripps explores seeds with school group

teachers with the seed curriculum used by IGS and PHA and explain how it connects with the Massachusetts Science Teaching Standards. The workshop will offer professional development points for teachers along with an understanding of how to follow up with lessons that build on the subjects both IGS and PHA teach through their programs.

Together with IGS we have also reorganized the Martha's Vineyard Environmental Educators group. This network of island environmental and natural science organizations shares a mission to enhance environmental science education in our schools. Currently the group is working to

increase teacher awareness of the resources these organizations offer and to collaborate on teacher training workshops in the future.

In another kind of school outreach, some of our MV Wildtype plants will soon be growing at the Chilmark School. Native plants, grown from local wild-collected seed, will be used in The Nature Conservancy's native plant garden designed for second and third graders. Each student will be in charge of the planting and care for one native Vineyard plant. This caretaking role will acquaint students with the importance of biodiversity and the native plants in our ecosystem as well as strengthen the schools' role as a community conservation ally.

## Martha's Vineyard Floristic Study Group

The Arboretum has become the central resource for the *Flora of Martha's Vineyard and Dukes County*. Currently 1,600 specimens have been collected and prepared and are held in our herbarium. Also we are currently working with Jessica Dyson, GIS manager for the Nature Conservancy of Massachusetts, to create a digital mapping system. In April a meeting was convened with participants from the MV Land Bank, The Nature Conservancy, Polly Hill Arboretum, and Sheriff's Meadow Foundation to consider our next steps. Many of the participants were from the original Martha's Vineyard Sand Plain Restoration group that published the first flora in 1997. The group reemerged with a new name—Martha's Vineyard Floristic Study Group—and a new focus—coupling herbarium specimens and geo-referenced digital maps.



Martha's Vineyard Floristic Study Group



# Native Snowbells: Two American Beauties

by Matt Lobdell

The genus *Styrax* (snowbells) has long been considered a promising group of woody plants for the American landscape. Valued for their beautiful white flowers appearing en masse in the late spring, snowbells bridge the gap between early-spring staples such as flowering cherries and magnolias and late bloomers like stewartias. The flowers appear after the leaves have emerged and dangle beneath, lending the plant a neat green-and-white layered look. Often compared to their close relative the more widely grown silverbells (*Halesia* spp.), the flowers of the snowbells are not as strongly bell-shaped, and the fruits produced—green and fuzzy, reminiscent of a miniature peach—are far different from the brown winged fruits of *halesia*.

Perhaps more than any other reason, it is limited availability that has given *Halesia* the edge over *Styrax* in our landscapes; excepting two Asian snowbells that are more available in the nursery trade and more common in gardens. The fragrant snowbell (*Styrax obassia*) is valued by

The seed capsules of *Styrax americanus* Photo: Rick Lewandowski



The reflexed flowers of American snowbell Photo: Rick Lewandowski



gardeners and plant enthusiasts alike for its regal appearance, ornamental bark, and fragrant flowers. The more elegant Japanese snowbell (*S. japonicus*) boasts several cultivars including pink-flowered, weeping, variegated, dwarf, and burgundy-leaved forms.

The diversity of snowbells extends far past these two species: currently the genus is estimated to contain 130 species—74 in Central and South America, 49 in Asia, one spanning the Mediterranean and Middle East, and four in the United States. Two of these, the shrubby American snowbell (*Styrax americanus*) and the bigleaf snowbell (*S. grandifolius*), are native to the eastern United States. In the shady woodlands they call home, these plants flower weakly and grow spindly with an odd twisted, forking habit. However they are well suited for cultivation. When brought into the garden, our native snowbells flourish, producing sturdy plants that flower abundantly.

The American snowbell (*Styrax americanus*), an attractive shrub reaching 3–9' in height (up to 15' in the wild), is the most widely distributed snowbell in North America, occurring naturally over much of the southeastern and south-central regions of the U.S., and even as far north as Kankakee, Illinois. Despite the name snowbell, the flowers are scarcely bell-shaped; the pure-white petals are white as snow, but curled backward exposing the yellow stamens, creating an open tousel look.

The flowers of American snowbell cloak a large shrub at PHA in mid-June.

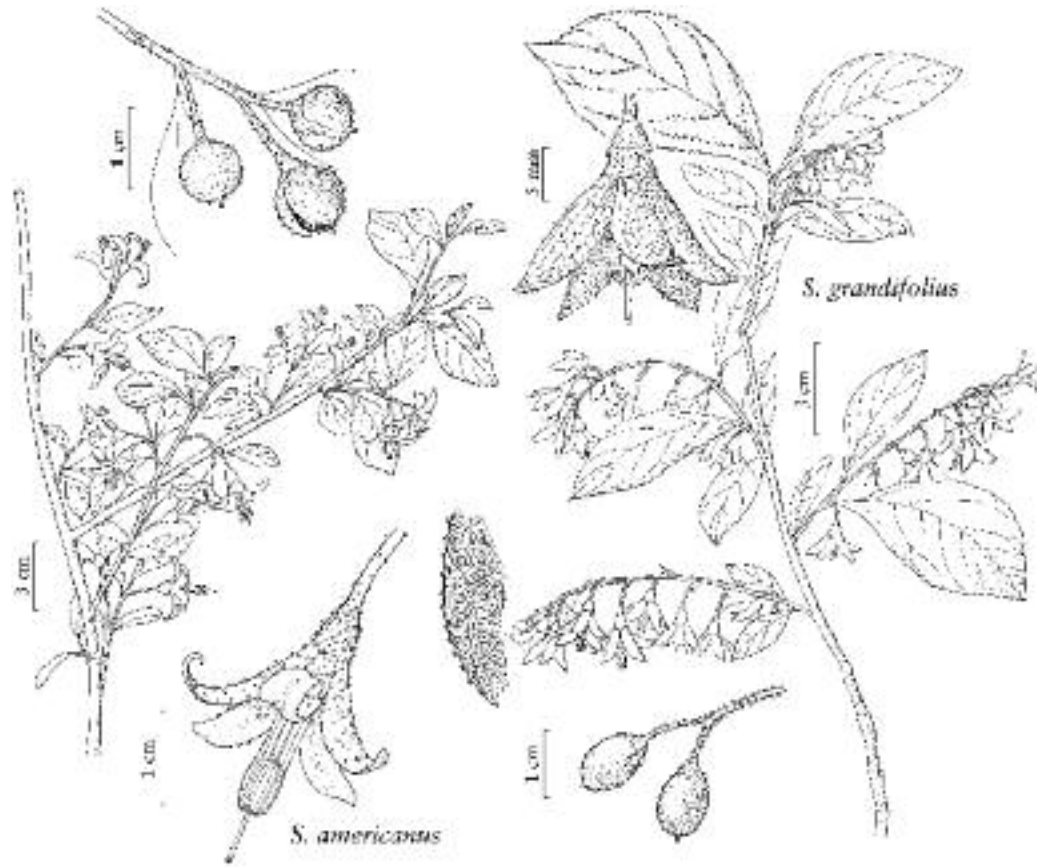


Illustration by Barbara Alongi, courtesy of the Flora of North America (please visit [FNA.org](http://FNA.org) for more information)

The American snowbell is considered to be hardy to USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 5, though plants tracing their lineage to southern populations are unlikely to perform well outside of Zone 6 or 7.

The bigleaf snowbell (*Styrax grandifolius*) is taller in height (reaching 6–12' in cultivation and 20' in the wild) and has a smaller native range. Though not endangered overall, it is declining in the northern parts of its range and is presumably extinct in Ohio and considered endangered in Illinois and Indiana. As the common name makes obvious, the leaves are big! In contrast to the pale green, slightly waxy, smaller leaves of the American snowbell, the larger leaves of bigleaf are deep green with a somewhat glossy appearance. The tightly clustered stamens are golden yellow and contrast well with the white petals and green leaves. Relatively uncommon in cultivation, bigleaf snowbell has gained popularity in recent years due to influential southern horticulturist J. C. Raulston (1940–1996) recommending the species in the South, where many were surprised by its dense growth and profuse flowering. It is considered to be hardy to USDA Zone 6.

Both of these plants, as well as several

additional snowbells, can be observed in the plant collections of the Polly Hill Arboretum. A grouping of American snowbells stands in one of the beds slightly south of the Homestead. Admire these beautiful shrubs on your next visit!



## Styrax in cultivation

MATT LOBDELL provides an overview of the cultivated species and highlights some of the cultivars of *S. japonicus*

The elegant *Styrax japonicus* (above and right) is the most widely cultivated species.

**T**HROUGH CONSIDERED a rare group of ornamental plants for most of the 20th century, *Styrax* (snowbells) have risen in popularity over the past three decades. But still only two species, *S. japonicus* and *S. alabam.*, are likely to be encountered in gardens.

Even seasoned plant enthusiasts are often surprised to hear that the genus consists of around 150 species. These are distributed across Asia and the Americas, with one species even present in the

Mediterranean area. Many of these species are of equal or superior ornamental value to *S. japonicus* or *S. alabam.* in various growing conditions. Although many are confined to botanic gardens, the genus still possesses vast unrealized potential in terms of landscape use.

**Genus characteristics**  
*Styrax* consists of both deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, with only the deciduous component well-represented in cultivation. They are

primarily planted for their flowers, which though relatively small, rarely exceeding 3cm across, appear en masse in late spring, borne either on a terminal inflorescence or a proliferation of shorter axillary clusters. With white petals (conidia lobes) surrounding neatly clustered filaments bearing yellow anthers, *Styrax* flowers somewhat resemble orange blossoms, albeit with a greatly reduced pistil.

The shape of the flower is affected by the petal characteristics, which

June 2014

**PHA research associate Matt Lobdell will publish "Styrax in Cultivation" in the June issue of the Royal Horticultural Society's publication, *The Plantsman*. Congratulations Matt! The article will be featured on our website soon.**



# Hooray for Hudsonia

by Tom Clark

The false-heathers (*Hudsonia* spp.) are delightful evergreen dwarf-spreading shrubs that clad themselves with myriad, golden yellow flowers in early summer while enduring some of the harshest environments on the Island. They are happiest where the sun beats down all day. Full sun combined with winds that frequent open areas and sandy, impoverished soils ensure that their ability to secure moisture and nutrients is always being tested, but they keep on blooming anyway.

Can I be forgiven for thinking that the genus *Hudsonia* was named to honor the British explorer Henry Hudson? My logic was sound. Henry Hudson did explore coastal North America, an area inhabited by two species of this strictly North American genus both of which occur on Martha's Vineyard. But in actuality this diminutive native was named by the granddaddy of botanical Latin, Linnaeus, to honor another Brit, botanist William Hudson—my apologies to all parties!

The name false-heather applies to two species: golden-heather (*Hudsonia ericoides*) and beach-heather (*H. tomentosa*). A third and federally endangered species, mountain golden-heather (*H. montana*), is restricted to a handful of sites in western North Carolina. All these common names allude to the plant's similarity to plain old unqualified heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). An 1898 article, "Popular American Plant Names," lists dog's dinner as yet another common name for golden-heather. Dog's dinner? This reference may be well understood in Wellfleet, Massachusetts (on Cape Cod), but the name is likely as befuddling elsewhere as beetlebung (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is beyond Martha's Vineyard. Such is the quirky regionalism of common names.

Golden-heather tramps up and down the east coast in dry sands and open pine-lands from Newfoundland to the New Jersey Pine Barrens and sporadically to North Carolina, seldom straying too far from the coast. Beach heather occurs in much the same coastal areas, but also



Beach-heather (*Hudsonia tomentosa*) endures sun, wind, and dry sandy soils amidst beach grass.



Golden-heather (*Hudsonia ericoides*) brightens the barren landscape it inhabits.



## Cynthia Bloomquist

extends halfway across the continent to Alberta and Minnesota.

These plants are members of the rock-rose family (Cistaceae), a largely Mediterranean plant family also represented on the Island by a few species of pinweeds (*Lechea*) and a handful of frostweeds (*Crocantemum*). All occur in related habitats: sunny open sites in impoverished soils. Beyond the morphological characteristics that define the rock-rose family, they also share unique adaptations that give them a leg-up on competitors in their preferred habitat.

In windswept areas rule number 1 is “Stay out of the wind.” Both hudsonias rise to a mere 4 to 8 inches but spread their broomlike, wispy branches a foot or two. Rule number 2, “Protect against moisture loss.” *Hudsonia tomentosa* has leaves densely covered with silky silver hairs that guard against moisture loss. This characteristic is also a useful feature for distinguishing between it and *H. ericoides* whose awl-like leaves are not nearly as hairy.

It'd be a challenge to find a sunnier, sandier, more windswept location than Cape Pogue on Chappy, but beach heather makes a living there among beach grass and poison ivy. Not quite as tough, *Hudsonia ericoides* is often found in barren openings in scrub oak and stunted pitch pine woods associating with bearberry, lowbush blueberry, and little bluestem. I've seen gorgeous colonies at Sepiessa Point Reservation, Tea Lane Farm, and Menemsha Hills.

One would think that such a tough plant must be a durable garden subject, but not so fast! From a gardener's standpoint neither species is well known or widely grown, even where native. It is likely that the specialized adaptations for a challenging environment also make it exacting in its cultural needs. One British authority states that *Hudsonia* “may be recommended to those knight-errants in gardening who delight in mastering difficult subjects.” Undoubtedly given proper siting and soil, it would make a splendid addition to a rock garden and would harmonize admirably with other heathland cohorts and dwarf conifers. But so long as the sun shines and the wind blows, perhaps it is best admired and enjoyed in its native Island haunts.

Arboretum volunteer Cynthia Bloomquist loves gardening with trees. But it wasn't always this way. She was inspired by Polly Hill to look at gardening in a different way. It's been an evolution.

She used to think that gardening was growing food. And she wasn't successful at it. A weekend gardener, she was busy, and frustrated by not having enough time. Despite good intentions, the garden failed. Later at age 50, she discovered perennials—tougher plants that could make it with less care. Next she discovered PHA and learned about Polly growing trees from seed at a similar age—and living to see the fruits of her labors! It had never occurred to her that she could garden with trees.

Naturally inquisitive with a degree in interdisciplinary science from MIT to prove it, Cynthia decided to learn more. She joined the Arboretum, attended classes, and like Polly, began observing her own landscape. Soon she was experimenting with native trees in her yard—moving pitch pine and holly seedlings around, clearing under her native birches, and augmenting the landscape with other plants. She was hooked!

Cynthia is an ardent and loyal PHA volunteer. She moved to the Island year-round in 2010 after retiring from 40 years in MIT's corporate relations



Cynthia Bloomquist

department and is now a year-round volunteer. In-season she leads tours with enthusiasm and verve and in the winter she collects tree measurements with precision.

Cynthia enjoys sharing different aspects of the Arboretum on her tours. She says, “PHA is not just a living museum of trees. There is something of everything here: plants, people, history, and architecture.” She particularly appreciates the combination of the historic farm setting with the diverse plantings. She also values the winter walks with staff and the monthly guide updates held throughout the summer. Despite her tenure, she attends the session held for new volunteers every year.

She encourages anyone with an interest in plants or an appreciation of Polly's story to consider volunteering. You'll learn a lot, and who knows, you may find yourself planting more trees! To learn more about becoming a volunteer, call the Arboretum at 508-693-9426.



The low stature and gray, fuzzy leaves of beach-heather help guard against moisture loss.

## THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

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### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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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](http://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.



## THE POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

PO Box 561  
West Tisbury, MA 02575

[www.pollyhillarboretum.org](http://www.pollyhillarboretum.org)

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## THEN & NOW

# Garden Tours



1976



2013

“Sharing is the very essence of the plant world.” Over the years Polly Hill welcomed many visitors to her property, from legendary plantspeople who made the pilgrimage to her garden to study and share, to curious passersby.

Recognizing the growing interest in her work, Polly created a brochure, “The History & Tour of Barnard’s Inn Farm” (the original name for the property), and began giving organized tours to interested groups. In 1976 she noted in

her guestbook, “The garden club of Martha’s Vineyard, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society [pictured left], a Felix Neck group, and others in smaller numbers came and looked and seemed to enjoy

what they saw.” We carry on this tradition today with daily guided tours at 10am (Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day) as well as prearranged tours for groups. People continue to come and look and enjoy what they see!