

The Gardens of Belgium
May 10 -14
2012



Hosted by the Polly Hill Arboretum

Don't miss this unique opportunity to travel as guests of the Polly Hill Arboretum to the exquisite gardens of Belgium. PHA Board member Philippe deSpoelberch will welcome guests on the first and second day to his private garden and Arboretum, newly opened to the public in 2011! Join staff of the Polly Hill Arboretum on this incredible garden adventure. **Space is limited to 20 total**, so please reserve a spot as soon as possible!

Wednesday 9 May 2012

Travel day to Brussels

Thursday 10 May 2012

On arrival in Belgium we shall be met and transferred to our hotel the **5-star Le Méridien, Brussels.** (below)



Later today we will transfer to **Herkenrode Garden** and the private estate of Viscount Philippe de Spoelberch. The Herkenrode Garden surrounding Philippe's home is designed more like a woodland garden than an arboretum and was originally established in the 18th Century on the estate of Jean-Baptiste de Herkenrode. Over the years the garden was laid out and planted with rare trees, and in 1923 the estate was purchased by Guillaume de Spoelberch, Philippe's grandfather. Philippe had his home (below) built next to the 25 acre garden in 1964 and two years later began his amazing dendrological collection.





Strategically placed throughout the garden are many fascinating structures, such as the Temple of Flora, an Obelisk, Pyramid, and beautiful garden sculptures.

Welcome Lunch at Arboretum Wespelaar

Return to Brussels for Dinner

Friday 11 May 2012

After breakfast this morning we return to Philippe de Spoelberch's private estate to visit **Wespelaar Arboretum (below)**. Philippe started planting the Wespelaar Arboretum in 1986 when he ran out of space in the Herkenrode Garden. Set on around 50 acres of old meadows and woodland the arboretum contains large collections of *Rhododendron*, *Magnolia*, *Acer*, *Tilia*, *Fraxinus*, *Quercus*, *Prunus*, *Malus*, *Betula*, *Carpinus* and many other varieties of trees and shrubs. One of the aspects that make this arboretum different is that the large trees and magnolias have space to spread their branches and become beautiful specimens. Many of the yellow magnolias are Philippe's introductions, planted in large open expanses with beautiful views to water features and sculptures.



Following our visit in Wespelaar we continue to the **Bokrijk Arboretum (below)**. In 1790 the Domain of Bokrijk, 1350 acres of beech woodland and wetlands, were sold to the town of Maastricht, originally having been land surrounding a Cistercian Convent belonging to the Abbey of Herkenrode. The castle was built in 1896, then the domain was acquired by the province in 1938 and the planting of the arboretum commenced in 1950 under the direction of Mr. Hertz. The arboretum of 45 acres is in a tranquil location some distance from the main park and tourist attractions in Bokrijk. Initially, the trees and ornamental plants were laid out in a systematic order of family groupings of *Ilex*, *Rhododendron*, *Acer* and *Prunus* as in a designed landscape park.



Bokrijk is also known for its collection of spectacular conifers, and since 1980, when Jef Van Meulder became curator, there has been less regimented planting and trees and shrubs have been inter-mixed to form a landscaped garden. There are over 1000 magnolias which will be in peak bloom!

Evening at leisure.

Saturday 12 May 2012

This morning after breakfast we travel to Eeklo for a visit to the **Arboretum Provinciaal Domein Het Leen**. The Arboretum is relatively new having been started in 1980 by Erik Winley, who maintained the 'greens' at the Provincial Domain. On a small plot along the entrance drive he planted out native trees and shrubs, but Eric had grander ideas for the arboretum and it took time to convince others and get the necessary support. A few years later he was able to expand his collection on to the adjacent land and from that time both exotic and cultivated plants were added to the collection, which then was spread over a three-acre site.

By 1996, when an additional three acres of land became available on the other side of the entrance drive, considerably more interest had developed in the Arboretum, including support within the Provincial government. In marked contrast to the early days, the laying-out of the new part was much more structured, with the new beds being planned in advance. Today the Arboretum covers 15 acres and is home to a

collection of 7000 trees and shrubs, including *rhododendrons*, *camellias*, *magnolias*, *prunus* and *viburnum*. The grounds are well maintained and labelled, and contain a collection of forms of *Sequoia* together with the largest reference collection of holly in Europe.

Following our visit we travel to the historical city of **Bruges (below)**, famous for its canals and lace where we will enjoy some free time to explore at leisure before returning to the hotel.



Sunday 13 May 2012

Following breakfast we visit the **Nationale Plantentuin van Belgie (National Botanic Garden of Belgium)**. The Castle of Bouchout, complete with moat, was a defensive fortress in the Middle Ages and was gradually transformed in the 17th and 19th centuries into a chateau having been acquired by King Leopold II in 1879.

In 1938 the government bought the chateau from the Belgian Royal Family, restored it completely, then removed the National Botanic Garden from the centre of Brussels to its new location. The 92 acre park, together with the adjoining estate of Meise, is now the site of one of the largest botanical gardens in the world, the Nationale Plantentuin van Belgie, whilst the Castle of Bouchout, with its square 14th century tower, houses an exhibition room and the conference rooms of the National Botanic Garden.



The collections hold around 25,300 accessions, and the outdoor collections of 7,630 taxa from all temperate regions of the world are set amongst age-old trees, ponds, and broad lawns, whilst the long promenade walks lead you through exquisite collections of medicinal plants, herbaceous plants, shrubs, trees and conifers. There are representatives of species and cultivars in the genera *Quercus*, *Rhododendron*, *Hydrangea*, *Acer* and *Magnolia*. An enormous glasshouse, the Plant Palace, covering 2.5 acres is home to more than 10,000 plant species, and 13 different sections are devoted to the flora of Africa, subtropical and tropical America, Australia and Asia.

Evening at leisure.

Monday 14 May 2012

Following breakfast we depart for our visit to the **Kalmthout Arboretum**. Charles Van Geert, a nurseryman from Antwerp, bought 3.75 acres of acid heathland to create a nursery at Kalmthout in 1856; he also planted many of the magnificent old trees around this date, especially the trees in the Old Conifer Avenue. When Van Geert died in 1896 the nursery was acquired by Antoine Kort who purchased additional land and extended the nursery to 87 acres. Unfortunately, like many other Belgian nurseries, the hostilities of the First World War resulted in the nursery being abandoned and the staff probably became refugees; many of whom sought refuge on the country estates of Great Britain until after 1918.

The nursery lay derelict for over 30 years and was only developed as an arboretum by the de Belder brothers, Robert and Georges who purchased the property in 1952. From 1984 onwards Robert and Jelena de Belder commenced their plantings with an inspired vision, and the arboretum reflects their detailed attention to colour, form and texture. Carpets of flowering groundcovers, freshly sprouting Japanese maples, and the wonderful collection of flowering cherries and apples herald the arrival of Spring.

There are two ponds, a pretty pavilion draped with variegated ivy (**below**), and a pleasant country house with a terrace, surrounded by old rhododendron hybrids and reached by the Old Conifer Avenue.



In many ways the arboretum has the feel of a large private garden and this is attributed to Robert's wife, Jelena. Since 1986 the arboretum has been owned by the Province of Antwerp and now covers 30 acres, but seems much larger due to the way in which the landscape was laid out. It is managed by the Friends of the Arboretum of Kalmthout, and its future is secure.

Lunch is available here (not included).

In the afternoon we continue to the **Hemelrijk Garden**, in Essen. Hemelrijk, the 'Kingdom of Heaven' and once a monastery, is another garden created by Robert and Jelena de Belder over the last 40 years, in collaboration with Russell Page, a famous garden architect. Under the century-old planting of oaks and beech and throughout the meadowlands some 6000 trees and shrubs have been planted; including major collections of *Acer*, *Aesculus*, *Alnus*, *Betula*, *Carpinus*, *Hydrangea*, *Malus*, *Prunus*, *Pyrus*, *Quercus* and *Tilia* of which around 60 are listed as Champion Trees of Belgium. **Evening at leisure.**



Tuesday 15 May 2012

This morning following breakfast you are free to explore Brussels at leisure. At an agreed time you will be transferred back to the airport in time for your return flight (flights not included).

From \$3000.00 per person (land only). Includes \$1000 tax deductible donation to the PHA to cover staff costs. **Note** – All prices subject to change based on the currency exchange.

Included in the price

- 5 nights bed and breakfast at the 5-star Le Méridien, Brussels
- Comfortable coaching in Belgium
- Entrance to the National Botanic Garden of Belgium; the arboreta of Kalmthout, Bokrijk, Het Leen and Wespelaar; the private gardens of Herkenrode; and Hemelrijk Garden
- Services of a Brightwater Holidays representative
- Polly Hill Collections Manager Thomas Clark and his wife horticulturist Sandy Clark will be travelling with the group to answer horticultural questions.

Not included (per person)

- Single room supplement **\$670.00**
- Insurance
- Flights

Additional Notes – The schedule is subject to change, a more formal timeline will be presented as details are finalized. Participants will be required to make a \$1000.00 deposit (per person) to reserve a spot.

Questions? Contact Karin Stanley – karin@pollyhillarboretum.org or call 508-693-9426