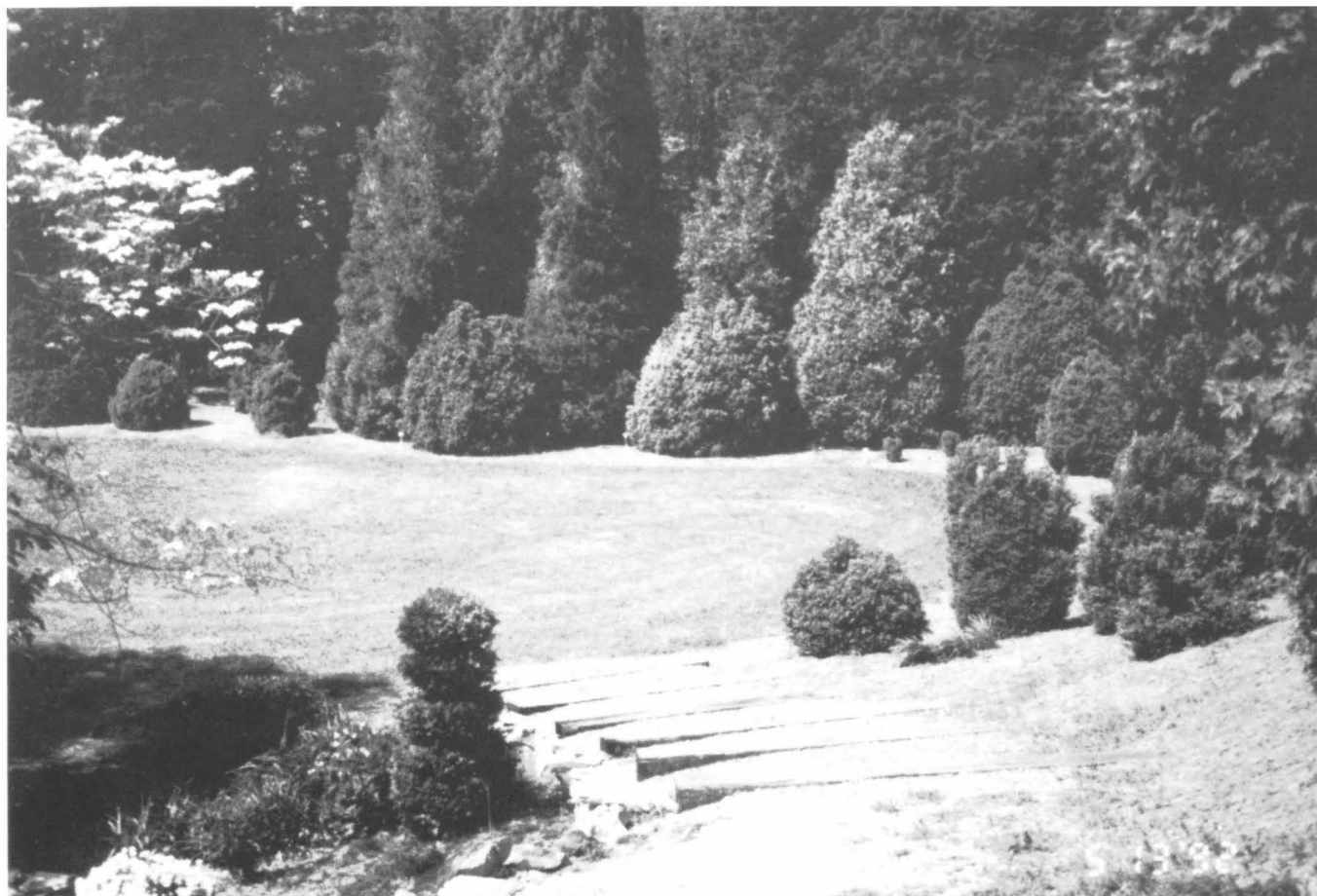


# The *Boxwood* Bulletin

A quarterly devoted to Man's oldest garden ornamental



A portion of the American Boxwood Society Memorial Garden, where a new amphitheater is to be constructed at the Orland E. White Arboretum. See story inside back cover. (Photo: D. Frackelton)

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# The American Boxwood Society

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The American Boxwood Society is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1961 and devoted to the appreciation, scientific understanding and propagation of the genus *Buxus* L. There are more than 800 members in the United States and nine foreign countries.

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Technical articles, news, history, lore, notes, and photographs concerning boxwood specimens, gardens or plantings are solicited for possible publication in *The Boxwood Bulletin*. Photographs should be suitable for reproduction and fully captioned. Suggestions regarding format and content are welcome. Material should be submitted to:

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Material to be returned to the sender must be submitted with a self-addressed envelope carrying suitable postage. Every effort will be made to protect submittals, but the Society cannot be responsible for loss or injury.

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# Thinning Boxwood

Porter Briggs

In thirty years of publication of *The Boxwood Bulletin*, more than forty articles have mentioned the importance of thinning boxwood.

Thinning is important to the plant. But how much do we thin? When? How often? Do we use shears, pruners or our hands? How far down the stem do we break or cut when thinning? How can we thin or cut back boxwood without shears? What happens when we don't thin? How did boxwood get along before anyone thinned them?

Our company takes care of boxwood at more than a hundred sites in Virginia and surrounding states. We thin thousands of boxwoods, including those at dozens of large public and private gardens.

We had to ask the above questions about thinning boxwood. Over time we have learned how the plants respond to thinning, and have developed our own answers as to how much, how often, when, etc. In researching the answers, we looked back to past articles in this bulletin. We researched the subject at major libraries and talked to horticulturists and nurserymen.

Thinning, of course, is only one part of an integrated approach to the proper care and management of boxwood. This article addresses itself only to this one area. Pruning is a different issue and is not addressed in this article.

There are more than 150 registered cultivars of boxwood. The thinning requirements vary widely depending on the cultivar. Thinning is important for most of the commonly occurring cultivars, and especially for the slow but thick growing *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa', known commonly as "English" boxwood. It is difficult to generalize in describing thinning practices, yet the principles described in this article are appropriate to the cultivars of boxwood that we most commonly see in the middle Atlantic region.

## Thinning is very important to boxwood

Thinning is as important as any other activity in successfully maintaining the health and beauty of boxwood.

Stan Driver, our company horticulturist, has this to say about the importance of thinning boxwood:

"Thinning opens up the plant to proper amounts of air and light. The interior area of the properly thinned plant is dried by the sun and the free flow of air, thus diminishing the incidence of insect, mites, fungus and disease, all of which prefer a dark and damp habitat. The thinned plant also allows moisture to easily reach the interior stems and the basal roots. The additional foliage which grows extensively on the interior stems of the thinned plant creates a vigorous plant to resist leaf miner (which occurs almost exclusively in "American"), psyllid, decline, root rot and other maladies. It also produces more flexible stems that better resist breakage from snow, ice and accidental human intervention. Thinning also enhances the billowing effect, the rich green color and the fine texture of new growth.

"Debris in the properly thinned boxwood is less likely to remain in the plant; it tends to fall to the ground of its own weight. This reduction of debris enhances plant health and reduces the breeding area of insects, spiders and fungi. Incidentally, the debris that does fall to the ground under the boxwood should be cleaned out, ideally every year. We recommend that before cleaning out this debris, the exterior foliage should be vigorously brushed by hand. Wear garden gloves and use a garden hose to clean out the inside of the plant. Finally, using a very soft-toothed rake or yard broom, remove the debris from under the plant and burn it.

"We see *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' with peripheral growth

so thick that even water has difficulty penetrating into the interior. This keeps the water from penetrating inside the drip line of the shrub, which reduces the water and nutrients to the roots inside the drip line. This problem is more acute if there is grass around the plant, because the water that falls outside the dripline is taken first by the roots of the grass. Thinning the plant opens it up so that water can fall inside the drip line."

## Thinning is highly labor-intensive

The question that every boxwood gardener faces is, "Where do I find trained personnel to do the thinning?"

Before we assumed the maintenance at many of the larger gardens, the management was limited to either shearing or doing nothing about thinning. Thinning by hand is an extremely labor-intensive task. Not surprisingly, we learned that most boxwood gardeners cannot afford to do the thinning, not to mention finding qualified and properly motivated workers.

By the extraordinary serendipity of nature, boxwood cuttings are especially suited for use in floral decorations at certain times during the year. Furthermore, when properly packaged and stored at 32-35 degrees Fahrenheit, the cuttings maintain their resiliency and freshness. These characteristics enable our company to sell the clippings from the thinning activities to the floral industry for use in cut flower arrangements.

The revenues from these sales enable us, in turn, to provide our service at no charge to the owner or manager of the boxwood. Thus, none of our clients pays us a copper for our services. We earn all our revenues from the sale of the clippings.

We have been asked whether we are likely to cut too much because we sell

by the pound. We have not had that problem. We prefer to thin less rather than more, because we can work more efficiently when taking less. Most importantly, of course, if the boxwood client does not like our work, we lose the privilege of taking care of his or her boxwood.

We consider all types of sites, but when there are too few mature plants, it is efficient for us to go to the site only when there are a number of other sites in the immediate vicinity. There are neighborhoods throughout Virginia and neighboring states where we take care of 10 to 20 sites in a neighborhood. This works very well for all parties. In several cases, one homeowner has organized a whole neighborhood or town for us to come and service other residences in the vicinity.

### Questions and Answers

#### *How often do I thin my boxwood?*

The faster-growing cultivars must be thinned more often. The frequency depends on the health and vigor of the plant, the soil, amounts of water, fertilizer and the quality of plant care in the past. As a general rule, "American" boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) should be thinned every two or three years and "English" (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa'), every three to four. Again, this is a very general rule and there are many exceptions.

#### *How do I know when it is too thick?*

Look inside the plant just beneath the exterior foliage to see whether there is a noticeable amount of dried and brownish foliage. This indicates that the plant is too thick and not getting enough light and air. Then examine the main stems on the inner part of the plant, where you should see extensive foliage growing all along the stems.

Standing a few feet from the plant, you should be able to have a glimpse inside the plant. Next, run your hand along the peripheral growth a few inches inside the plant. The main stem should move easily. If they are too



*The area in the top center shows the extensive growth on the inside of this plant. This occurs when the plant receives ample air and light. (Photos: Porter Briggs)*



*This photograph shows the interior of the plant with no foliage. This occurs when the interior of the plant receives no air and light.*



*With your head inside the plant as shown here, you can see whether the interior is too dark.*

thick, they will seem weighted down, Finally, after poking a stick in the shrub to check for snakes, open the shrub by pulling apart the peripheral growth, put your head inside the plant and release the stems, which will close around your head. The light should be bright and even throughout the plant. If it seems dark, you probably need to thin it.

#### *How much do I thin?*

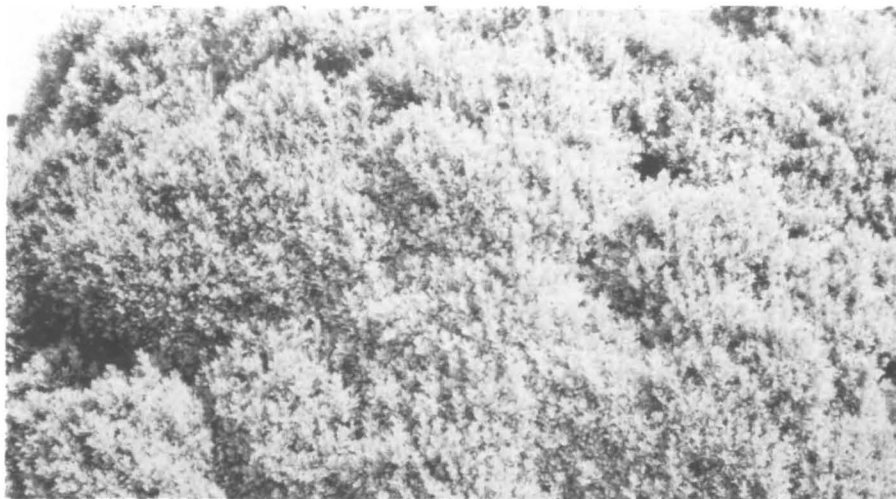
This is like describing in words how to paint a picture. Nevertheless, the surest way is to reach down inside the boxwood and grasp a main stem flush with foliage well down from the thick outer growth and bend it over so that it is fully displaced from its normal position. The surrounding outer growth will fill in the empty spot it had occupied. Vigorously brush the area around the spot from which the stem has been removed. This will show you how that spot will appear if you remove the stem. You should not see a great deal of difference.

Roughly speaking, any remaining holes in the outer growth should be no larger than 3 inches. If the desired effect is achieved, then break or cut off the stem. On plants up to 15 to 24 inches in height, break or cut the stem at 2 to 4 inches; up to 2 feet high, break or cut at 4 to 6 inches; above 2 feet, 4 to 8 inches; and above 3 feet, 6 to 12 inches.

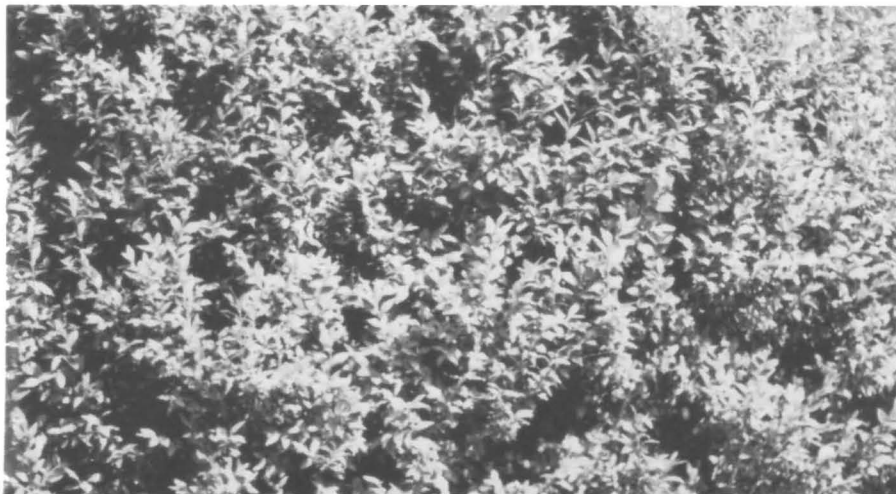
#### *Should I break the stem or cut it with hand pruners?*

We believe that there is little difference. Pruning requires a cutting tool, and the cutting edge of the pruner can carry disease from one plant to the next unless sterilized between plants. The danger of transmitting disease is remote when breaking stems by hand. We have found that breaking stems is entirely appropriate when working with healthy plants.

Lynn Batdorf, International Registration Authority for cultivated *Buxus L.* and Horticulturist at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., holds a contrary view. He



*This boxwood is too thick. There are no openings in the exterior foliage through which air and light can reach the interior of the plant.*



*The close-up of exterior foliage shows uniformly distributed openings to 1 to 3 inches in the exterior foliage, which allows air and light to reach the interior.*



*The lighter part of the top of this hedge was sheared with electric hedge trimmers. It will take years for this plant to recover its billowy, soft exterior texture.*

believes it is better to use pruners because they produce a clean, even cut on the branch, which leaves less surface area exposed. He points out that, "by breaking the branch, you leave a rough surface at the break. That surface heals slowly and poorly, weakens that part of the branch, and provides an excellent entry point for disease, such as *Volutella*, which is spread throughout the xylem and twigs. Dipping pruners in a 50% alcohol solution after use on each shrub eliminates the danger of transmitting disease. The use of pruners is particularly important on plants that are stressed, because they are already more vulnerable to disease."

As noted, our experience has been that on healthy plants, breaking the stems is appropriate, because the incidence of communicable disease in boxwood is rare.

When we do find a plant that is stressed, we usually do not thin it, and if we do, we do it very carefully and use hand pruners.

#### *When do we thin?*

Thinning can be done at almost any time of the year. The best time to prune the plant is at the most dormant phase, which corresponds to our needs in the months of October to December, when the floral industry is at the peak usage of this product. Some feel it is better to thin in late winter or early spring, just before the new growth starts. We do not recommend late summer pruning or thinning, because that causes new early-fall growth which likely will experience winter burn.

#### *What happens if we do not thin?*

Boxwood will continue to live if it is not thinned. Nature's way of thinning is for the plant to grow thicker and thicker until large sections of the plant break off, whether through wind, ice, snow or just old age. When this has happened, large gaps exist throughout the plants, which allow the needed air and light into the interior of the plant. We see dozens of sites of boxwood 50 to 150 years old that have many large

gaps in otherwise healthy growth. Many of these gaps are large enough to walk right into.

Properly thinning the boxwood will prohibit these gaps from occurring in the first place. Where these gaps have occurred, thinning will also help new growth fill them in over a number of years.

#### *When do we use shears?*

Never.

We acknowledge that some very large public gardens shear their boxwood and the shrubs continue to live for many years. Shearing will not kill boxwood, and it will produce a topiary effect if that is what is desired. But the richness, elegance and singular wonder of boxwood is lost when they are sheared. When sheared, they grow very thick stems on the outer layers and are not pleasant to touch. To my eyes, they lose their lovely billowy, majestic grace.

The exception is when major renovation must be done on the plant. That is the subject for another article, but when that is done, shears are one of the appropriate tools that sometimes will be needed.

If you have comments or anecdotes from your own experience, we would welcome your correspondence.

#### *Excerpts from past issues of The Boxwood Bulletin:*

*Vol. 1(1):5.1961. A. G. Smith, Jr.*

Thinning starts by removing weak and wounded branches from the top center of the plant. Where necessary, shorten the longer branches. Continue the thinning over the entire upper half of the plant. Very heavy cutting should be done in the spring. Ordinary pruning may be done whenever it is most convenient.

*Vol. 2(2):20.1962. Capt. Reginald J. Vickers, M.C.*

Air and light must penetrate the bush if it is to remain in a healthy and vigorous condition, and pruning is the method we use to insure that this

condition exists. Due to the peripheral growth, there is a constant tendency for air and light to be excluded...[which] will result in a certain amount of dying back in the central portion of the bush...Due to large trees...we have a leaf problem.

We do not use rakes because they are too rough and injure the box bark...[After cleaning inside and below the plant] prune out dead wood...use gloves. You will find a percentage of fine, dead, leafless twigs, which can be easily brushed off...or twisted off at the branch [or] we use pruning shears... [On the inside on] wispy branches topped with a dead or dying spray... prune back to the main stems.

*Vol. 4(4):58.1965. Professor Albert S. Beecher*

The center portion must receive air and light, or it will die back and the stems will become weak. Much of the poor and declining boxwood in Virginia is caused by lack of proper thinning over the years...A plant thinned properly over the years has green leaves all the way up the stem...This thinning can be done any time...and is one of the major factors in growing healthy boxwood.

*Vol. 7(4):60.1968. Wiley N. Garrett and Gerald E. Smith*

The removal of individual dead limbs may leave unsightly open areas on the plant. These "gaps" can be closed by pulling the limbs together on the inside with soft twine or clothes line cord...Do not use wire, this may injure the limb.

*Vol. 9(2):20.1969. Alden R. Eaton*

Sometimes it is necessary to prune...lightly even though it has plenty of space to grow. At times boxwood will form a thick outer layer of leaves so dense that most of the light is excluded from the inner parts of the plant.

*Vol. 13(1):9.1973. William A. Gray*

The random removal of five to ten inch twigs from the upper half of the plant, including the sides, is preferable to shearing or clipping. This can be done at any time.

*Vol. 13(2):32.1973. Jack Goehring*

To grow healthy, thriving boxwood, it is critical that they be pruned once a year by thinning some of the branches in the upper portion of the plant... Though this procedure takes more time, as it must be done by hand, the appearance of the plant is preserved because the exterior shape remains unchanged. Height and shape can be controlled by clipping the upper branches of the plant, but this clipping without the thinning of the crown will in time weaken the shrub.

Boxwood that has been neglected can be rejuvenated both by this interior thinning and be severely cutting back at the top...the general clipping and "deep crotching" can be done at any time of the year.

*Vol. 20(2):38.1980. John Boyd*

Breaking part of the foliage out...and later, after this plant puts out new growth, breaking out the longer pieces that you left earlier will keep the box at a given height...The tree box, if allowed to go, will get to be 25 feet or more, and when this happens, the plants are not pretty. The dwarf ('Suffruticosa' edit.) box, if not thinned, tends to bend over and break in a snow.

*Vol. 20(4):79.1981. Mrs. Bayard*

*Tuckerman and Mrs. George Knowles, Jr.*

Established bushes...should be thinned at the top. It is critical that they be pruned once a year by thinning some of the branches in the upper portion so that the center may receive air and light. Do not shear, but reach in and thin. The sides may also be pruned by clipping, but again, do not shear.

*Vol. 25(2):42.1985 Alfredo Siani*

It is clear that, after such a long time, the plants are asking for help. Too much accumulation of dead leaves and debris has been killing some of the branches...But I shall be gentle and, certainly, will try not to alter whatever nature in these two centuries of growth has made of the plants.

*Vol. 28(2):25.1988. John W. Boyd,*

*Jr.*

Although we speak of "clipping"

boxwood, it is broken by hand...sprays are usually 6-12 inches long...We take off only one-third of all the green on the outer portions of the plant...Often walks are edged with boxwood, not allowing enough room for the plant to grow, eventually closing the walk. When this is the case, the walk is opened by stripping the boxwood completely on the inside of the walk, leaving only bare branches...In plucking "tree" boxwood, often called "American" (*Buxus sempervirens*), we try to top most of it at 12-15 feet, because taller boxwood is not very nice to look at unless it is kept vigorous by pruning.

By plucking you allow sunlight in and new growth will appear along the trunk and stems. This care will help prevent "boxwood decline." I have never seen this disease in boxwood that had continuous good care. Remember that you cannot correct 10 to 30 years of neglect in only one pruning.

*Vol. 29(2):30.1989 Suzanne Schrage-Norton and J. Dean Norton*

You could never imagine how good the boxwood looked after pruning and cleaning. Their appearance improved 100%.

Good healthy boxwood should have foliage growing along the interior stems. This habit of growth is encouraged by removing dead branches and debris and keeping the plant well plucked to allow air and light passage

into the interior.

*Vol. 30(1):6.1990. Stephen D. Southall*

In plucking smaller plants up to 15 inches, smaller stems 2 to 4 inches should be chosen for breaking. When the plants are 15-24 inches, then larger stems 4 to 6 inches can be broken, and with plants above 24 inches, the stems can be 4 to 8 inches without hurting the appearance of the plants...Boxwood which are grown in the direct sun have a greater need for thinning than those grown in partial shade...The interior of plants should be hosed with a strong stream of water periodically in order to clean out any accumulation of dead leaves and other debris. The cleanliness of the interior of plants is critical in the prevention of diseases which thrive in dampness.

*Vol. 30(4):75.1991 William A. Gray*

'Suffruticosa' [*sic*] and some other cultivars benefit from plucking 5- to 10-inch twigs from denser parts of the plant to allow light and air into the interior. When the boxwood eventually outgrow their location, keep in mind that pruning will be a tough job—but far cheaper than transplanting. Late November is a good time to prune.

---

*Porter Briggs is a new member of The American Boxwood Society. He is President of Virginia Boxwood Company, which cares for large and small plantings of boxwood.*

## ***Buxus sempervirens* 'Salicifolia'**

### **A Splendid Boxwood for a Special Place**

Mary A. Gamble

*Buxus sempervirens* 'Salicifolia', often called the "willow box," is a boxwood of exceptional grace. It can be compared to the "weeping willow" (*Salix alba*) on three counts: its form or silhouette, its leaf color, and its leaf shape. If allowed to grow naturally, 'Salicifolia' matures into a medium-large boxwood. It has a distinctive beauty which, to be appreciated fully,

needs a 'frame' of open space. It must be sited with care if it is to achieve its full landscape potential.

'Salicifolia', because of its willow characteristics, seems at home near water. In such a setting, Shakespeare's line in "Hamlet" about the "willow that grows aslant a brook" would apply equally to the willow box. But the principal need of 'Salicifolia' is *space*.



Almost life-size, this photograph shows the elegant symmetry of the uniformly elliptical leaves. (Photo: Jack Horner)



This 20-year-old 'Salicifolia' is starting to crowd its space at the U.S. National Arboretum. (Photo: Mary Gamble)

Of course, it can be pruned into a smaller mass, but such control robs it of its individuality. 'Salicifolia' controlled is still a handsome boxwood, but its beauty and distinction now rest on its leaf color and form, which must be appreciated "close up."

*Buxus sempervirens* 'Salicifolia' is a comparatively older cultivar. It was listed in Karl Koch, *Dendrologie*, in 1872. If the students of *Buxus* who consider the name 'Salicifolia' to be a synonym for *B. sempervirens* 'Angustifolia' are right, we can take it back another 100-plus years. 'Angustifolia' was listed in the *English Gardener's Dictionary* published in 1756. Let's just agree that 'Salicifolia' is no newcomer to the garden scene. Like all boxwoods, it should be judged on its individual merits.

In July 1969, the late J. T. Baldwin, Jr., of the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, sent a large box of 'Salicifolia' cuttings to the boxwood study group of the St. Louis Herb Society. At the time he wrote that

he had "obtained a 2-ft. tall specimen in 1962. This plant is now in 1969 5 ft. tall with a spread of 10 ft. I have had this variety [*sic*] around one of our dormitories with the most pleasing effect. It is a good plant, especially when it puts on new growth of pea-green color against the more somber green of the older foliage."

Our study group made 105 cuttings from the material Dr. Baldwin sent. Some 90 cuttings rooted. About two years later we set 20 of the resulting plants in a nursery plot set aside for the boxwood study group at the Missouri Botanical Garden. We distributed the balance to study group members for testing in their personal gardens. Results from this group were mixed, but our opinion was that private losses were due to their local conditions and should not be held against the plant.

As our nursery space at the Garden shrank over the years, we were forced to reduce the number of individual cultivars, including *B. sempervirens* 'Salicifolia'. The current nursery

inventory shows a total of seven 'Salicifolia', five in good condition, two in fair.

Our hope continued to be that either at the Garden or in a member's garden there would be an opportunity to plant a 'Salicifolia' "aslant a brook." This hope was never realized. Our conclusion was that 'Salicifolia' was indeed hardy. Its principal drawback was its size and the space required to do it justice.

The photograph of the sprig of 'Salicifolia' is approximately life-size. It shows the distinctive, narrowly elliptic leaves and their relative closeness to the stem. The photograph of the 'Salicifolia' plant was taken in the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. We were told by our tour guides and Dr. Henry T. Skinner, then Director of the Arboretum, that the plant was then about 20 years old. The photograph shows the weeping willow lines. It also shows that the space it would require at maturity had been underestimated. Clearly 'Salicifolia' is meant for special handling.



# *Buxus sempervirens* 'Fastigiata'

P. D. Larson

Size (25 years): Large; 9-10 feet high and 2 to 2 1/2 feet wide. A 40-year-old specimen measures 12 feet high and 5 feet wide.

Natural Form: Columnar tending toward conical with stiffly upright branches, dense foliage

Annual Growth: Fast; 3 1/2 to 3 3/4 inches in height and 3/4 to 1 inch in width

Leaf Color: Dark green

Leaf Shape: lanceolate and slightly revolute; acute tip; cuneate base

Leaf Size: Large; 7/8 to 1 1/3 inches long and 3/8 to 1/2 inch wide

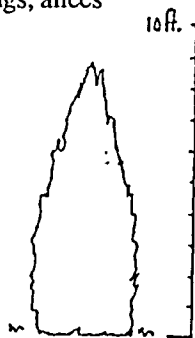
Leaf Surface: Glossy and smooth

Internodal Length: Long; 1/2 to 11/16 inches

Flowering Habit: Sparse flowering and sparse fruiting

Hardiness: Zones 6-8

Plant Use: Specimen, grouping for background and area separations, hedgings, allées



Registration: F. Meyer, "Plant Explorations" ARS 34-9:91.1951. Sometimes erroneously referred to as 'Hardwickensis Fastigiata'

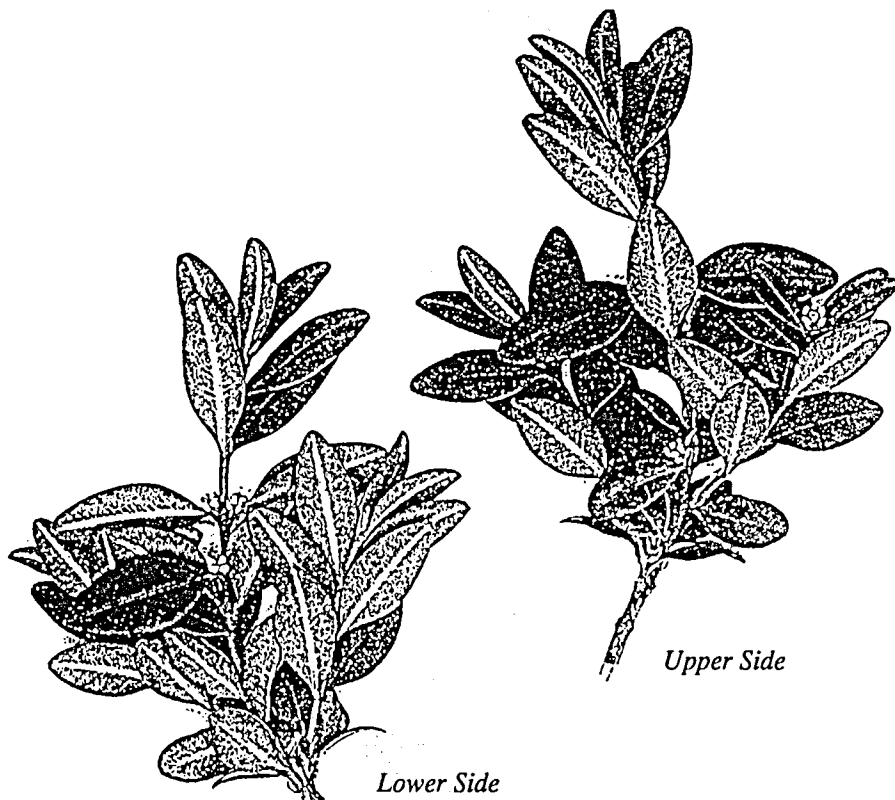
History: Most likely originated as an open-pollinated seedling somewhere in Europe.

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Bailey, L. H., *Hortus Third*, 1976

Flint, H. L., "Horticulture" March 1987

*The Boxwood Bulletin*, Vol.20(4):80. 1981., Vol. 21(4):65.1982., Vol. 27(3):65.1988.



Known Locations: Garden Club of Buzzards Bay, University of Washington Arboretum, U.S. National Arboretum, Orland E. White State Arboretum of Virginia

Culture and Care: Transplants readily. Tolerates siting in direct sun quite well; however, occasional die-back will occur on new fall growth when early freezes occur, as well as on new spring growth when a late freeze occurs. In either case, this die-back is not injurious to the plant, just ugly. The addition of organic compost as a soil amendment and 1 1/2 to 2 inches of mulch adds to the health of the plant. Water seldom and thoroughly; 1 inch of water every two weeks is sufficient for sites with well-drained soil. Tolerates a pH range of slightly acidic to slightly alkaline with a preference for the sweet side (alkaline). Demonstrates no fussy cultural requirements.

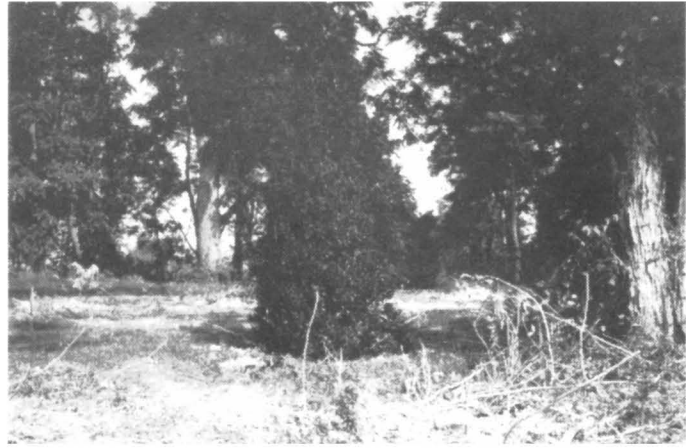
Pests and Disease: Indicates resistance to leaf miner and mites in the more humid climates. Indicates some attraction for psyllids. No serious diseases.

Propagation: Cuttings root readily without any special preparations. The poly-tent procedure usually produces cuttings in 7 to 8 weeks. Using outdoor well-prepared rooting beds located in a shady area also works well.

Availability (from *Boxwood Buyers Guide*, May 1990):  
Angelica Nurseries, RD#1, Box 174, Kennedyville, Md. 21645  
Eastern Shore Nurseries, Box 743, Easton Md. 21601  
Ferruci Nursery, Piney Hollow & Victoria Ave., Newfield, N.J. 28344  
Foxborough Nursery, Inc., 3611 Miller Road, Street, Md. 21154  
Woodland Nurseries, Rt. 4, Johnson Rd., Salisbury, Md. 21801



*Buxus sempervirens 'Fastigiata' in the ABS Memorial Garden is 8' high and 3' wide at age 24.*



*A 40-year-old Buxus sempervirens 'Fastigiata' at the State Arboretum is 12' high and 5' in width.*

## Visit a Missouri Garden and Meet Its Owner

Mary A. Gamble

Ferguson is a small city (population some 20,000) just northwest of St. Louis. It was founded in 1894 and named for Mr. William Ferguson, who had settled in the area in 1858. Many people then living in the general area were farmers and large land owners. In 1876 a Wabash Railroad spur line connected Ferguson to downtown St. Louis. It brought many new residents to the town. Many were craftsmen and shopkeepers. The population of Ferguson was principally of German descent, with a few Irish and some French. Today Ferguson is a thriving bedroom community with a good percentage of its citizens working elsewhere.

At one count there were 30 churches in Ferguson. At least 30 of its homes bear plaques attesting that they are at least a century old. Ferguson is an attractive, well-maintained community with more than its share of good gardens. Says a dyed-in-the-wool Fergusonite, "What we really pride ourselves on is our diversity. We have small and large new homes as well as our old houses. And we are proud that Ferguson has some notable gardens." In this story we take you to visit one.

Audrey Claus tends a highly

personal garden. "I've been a gardener all my life," says Audrey, who pursues some of her specific gardening interests as a member of both the Boxwood Society of the Midwest and the St. Louis Herb Society. "My father was a Lutheran minister who not only loved gardening, but also found a large vegetable garden necessary to help feed his family. He was an organic gardener long before organic gardening became both commonplace and fashionable.

"I grew up with gardening. I loved to grow vegetables and, at quite a young age, I was allotted a small flower plot. I love vegetables and grass and the landscape in general. And I always wanted a productive garden. I attribute my interest in gardening first to my father and second to just plain old curiosity. I like the sensuousness of feeling and growing things; and, from the beginning, I have related gardening to literature and my other interests in life as they have developed."

Audrey Claus is a Ferguson native. She lives in a house which is about 1 1/2 miles from the Lutheran parsonage in which she was born and grew up. The area is called Pauline Park, near what was once called Blizzard Hill, the highest point in Ferguson. She has lived

in her present house for 36 years. She, like so many conscientious gardeners who want the best, had to start from scratch. That is, with soil that had been bulldozed to hardpan clay.

Audrey continues her story. "My sister helped me. We brought topsoil little by little by little, and dragged up compost from our father's garden. And I had a bit of luck. The back yard of one of my neighbors was slightly higher than mine." Whenever we had a heavy rain some of his topsoil washed down onto my garden. I spent every spare penny on the garden and gradually built up the topsoil. At the time I had two jobs. I taught all day, and wrote all night. This left me with little time for gardening, but I had a five-year plan. It was about then that I asked Madeline Sutter (a fellow Herb Society member who was designing herb gardens professionally) to help me get started. She laid out the garden's framework and showed me how to space and to plant the individual herbs. Jane Penhale, my Ferguson neighbor, helped me in many ways.

"Now my five-year plan has grown into a 10-year plan; and I am thinking of the changes I am going to make. I make some seasonal changes, but no

grave ones. I don't change in any systematic way. Now that I have more time to devote to my garden, I may make more considered changes."

Audrey's favorite flowering plants are hybrid lilies. (Daylilies run a poor second.) *Veronica* is a favorite because of its lovely blue blossoms. She likes white *Begonias* and *Dianthus* and little flowers. High on her list are snapdragons, *Physostegia* (commonly known as obedient plant), daisies (plain white Shastas preferred), *Coreopsis* (first choice, the pale 'Moonbeam'). Of course she likes jonquils, and *Lantana* because it never dies until there is a killing frost.

When asked to name her favorite herbs Audrey began counting on her fingers as she named them, then gave up at 50! She uses some of her herbs until they're gone from the garden. She uses others not at all, but continues to plant them because she likes to smell or feel them. She said again that the greatest pleasure she gets from her garden is the sensual enjoyment of looking at the plants which crowd it. "While the utility of an herb is nice, says Audrey, "I would still like it if I didn't use a thing. Herbs don't let you stand still. There is always something more to learn about them."

Audrey Claus uses boxwood as an accent plant in her formal garden. She also has a border of boxwood for a new little garden she is starting. She adds, "I really want to make a little boxwood fence to hide a neighbor's double-decker automobile tire bird bath. That would be an improvement, don't you think?" She cares for her boxwood "as needed." So far, she considers she has been lucky with maintenance. She prefers *Buxus sempervirens*, the European species; and likes the cultivars which have acute-pointed leaves in the deeper green shades.

"Boxwood," says Audrey Claus, contributes dignity, order, stability and scent—which I love—to my garden." Audrey Claus's interests span gardening, literature, classical music, and travel. She rates them "neck and neck."



Audrey Claus "feels" one of her door-yard boxwoods. (Photos: Jane Penhale)



Audrey Claus' formal garden measures 12x25 feet. It is the attractive focal point of her somewhat narrow and deep back yard. A fine stand of bluegrass completes the manicured lawn. Audrey uses boxwood as an accent and as a border.

## NOTICE

### Boxwood Seminar

The State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandly Experimental Farm and Virginia Boxwood company are sponsoring a six-hour intensive seminar on the care and maintenance of boxwood. The time is Wednesday, November 4, 1992, from 9:15 to 4:15.

The program will include:

- A two-hour short course on everything the professional horticulturist needs to know about the care and maintenance of boxwood, presented by Lynn R. Batdorf, horticulturist and curator of boxwood, perennials and aquatics at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. and International Registration Authority for cultivated *Buxus L.*, and Dean Norton, horticulturist for Mount Vernon Ladies Assoc.

- A 90-minute seminar on the use of non- and low-toxic substances to control leaf miner, mites, psyllid, and diseases, presented by Jeff Ertel, grounds superintendent at UVA; Alan Jones, office manager of Bartlett Tree Experts, Charlottesville; and Bill Wolf, owner of Necessary Trading Company, which sells organic fertilizers and biological pest controls.

- A 30-minute presentation by Bill Wolf on the latest IPM techniques related to boxwood.

- A 45-minute presentation on selecting the right cultivar for each gardener's special requirements by P. D. Larson, curator of boxwood for the Arboretum.

The fee is \$50, \$45 for members of the Friends of the State Arboretum, including lunch and a copy of the proceedings. Registration is limited to 45. To register, contact Christine Flanagan, Blandly Experimental Farm, P.O. Box 175, Boyce, Virginia 22620 or call (703) 837-1759.

Only 150 copies of the proceedings will be published. Those wishing a copy should send in orders with \$15 payment in advance to Ms. Flanagan.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### To the Editor:

I was interested in Mary A. Gamble's article in the July 1992 issue of *The Boxwood Bulletin*. Almost every garden in south Louisiana, including New Orleans, has what we now know as *Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica* in it. Only it has always been called "Creole box." It was only when I saw a marker on a hedge at Rosedown Plantation in St. Francisville, Louisiana, that I realized our Creole box was officially *Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica*.

I'm sure it was in Louisiana long before 1937, as my husband's great-grandmother's garden at St. Louis Plantation outside of Plaquemine, Louisiana, had box hedges, and the Plantation's 100th anniversary was

recently celebrated. The Gays of St. Louis Plantation came down from St. Louis, and my husband's grandparents lived in St. Louis, where he was the mercantile manager for the Louisiana plantations. They traveled back and forth on a Mississippi steamboat. So it is hard to believe that cuttings weren't taken up to St. Louis and planted there, though they may have been called "Creole."

We have "*japonica*" bushes here in our garden, and I think we have other varieties that are more interesting and beautiful. The amazing thing is that "*japonica*" is the only box that does well in the South, but it is also the hardiest box.

Pamela R. (Mrs. Richard C.) Plater  
Rte. 2A, Box 123, Boyce, Va. 22620

### Members Share



Mrs. John Hart tends potted boxwoods on a terrace that is bordered by the dwarf form of *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis*. (Photo: John Hart)

## ABS Auction Has Become an Annual Meeting Tradition

At every annual meeting there is an auction of donated boxwoods. Organized by Mr. Richard D. Mahone in 1985, the auction is a tradition which is happily anticipated by a band of faithfuls. This year was no exception and the bidding was lively. A list of the cultivars to be sold, with information on each, was distributed to potential bidders prior to the auction.

## Boxwood Cultivars Auctioned at Annual Meeting May 13, 1992

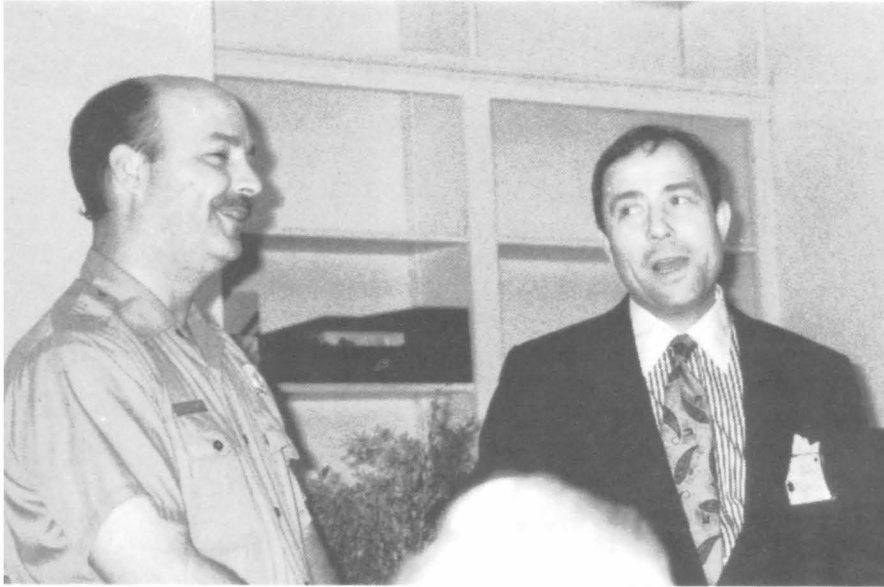
- Buxus microphylla* (requires shade, slow spreading growth)
- 'Grace Hendrick Phillips'- a sport of 'Compacta' (Kingsville' Dwarf), selected by Henry Hohman and named for the wife of ABS President Neil Phillips
- 'Green Pillow' - a sport of 'Compacta', selected by Henry Hohman, once known as Kingsville #1A. Needs a shady location to look best; low mound shape
- 'Sunlight' - believed sport of 'Compacta', selected by Dr. J. T. Baldwin, as S-11, grown by BSMW in St. Louis, registered October 1988
- 'Sunnyside' - donated to Memorial Garden by John Vermeulen & Son Nursery in September 1985
- 'Winter Gem' - a Vermeulen donation; also known as 'Asiatic Winter Gem'
- 'John Baldwin' - seedling selected by Dr. J. T. Baldwin in Williamsburg, named for him after his death and registered October 1988. Wonderful bluish color, slow growth, narrow vertical shape



Workshop participants relaxing during a break. In the background left are *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' plants grown by President Dale T. Taylor and presented to the attendees. Plants on the center table were donated for the auction. (Photos: D. Frackelton)



ABS auctioneer John W. Boyd, Jr., in action during lively bidding for rare *Buxus* cultivars, with President Dale T. Taylor keeping tabs, at the May 1992 annual meeting. (Photo: John Hart)



Mr. Mike Lawn, Grounds Maintenance Foreman at the White House and ABS President Dale T. Taylor share a joke at the annual meeting. (Photo: John Hart)

*Buxus sempervirens*

- 'Aristocrat' - selected and named by Dr. J. T. Baldwin; large pyramidal plant; originals located at William & Mary, at head of sunken garden
- 'Cliffside' - Dr. Baldwin's selection before 1974, stiff spiky branches
- 'Elegantissima' - named in 1872; is much more attractive in some shade
- 'Fastigiata' - beautiful narrow, upright plant with dark shiny foliage
- 'Glauca' - named in 1864; bluish cast, breaks dormancy later than most *sempervirens* slower growth, but large plant at maturity
- 'Hardwickensis' - there are two forms: a loose, tall floppy pyramidal one and 'Pyramidalis' - a more attractive, tighter plant with dark glossy foliage
- 'Graham Blandy' - extremely narrow columnar form, origin unknown, came to Blandy Farm probably in the late 1930s.
- 'Henry Shaw' - an Edgar Anderson Balkan boxwood, registered by the BSMW in 1985; very hardy and sturdy
- 'Latifolia Maculata' (striped yellow, new growth bright gold) - named 1896; Henry Hohman called it 'Latifolia Aurea Maculata' and

- probably acquired his plant from Hillier Nursery, England
- 'Myosotidifolia' - listed by Kew Gardens, 1896
- 'Myrtifolia' - named in 1782; small leaf, dark green color, slow growing
- 'Northland' - from New York state, hardy, slow growing, possible variegation
- 'Ponteyi' - named in 1893; dark green, large mound, sometimes produces variegated sports
- 'Ste. Genevieve' - registered by the BSMW in 1971; has proven sturdy and hardy in Missouri
- 'Vardar Valley' - brought from Yugoslavia by Edgar Anderson in 1934; named in 1957. Broad, low (not more than 3' high) extremely hardy

*Buxus sinica var. insularis* - Korean boxwood

- 'Justin Brouwers' - a seedling selected by Williamsburg nurseryman J. B. Brouwers; registered in 1989. Very slow growing, dark green foliage, tolerates full sun - an exceptional boxwood
- 'Tall Boy' - named by Sheridan Nurseries in Ontario, Canada. Very hardy

'Tide Hill' - a form similar to the Korean box which lines the front walkway at Blandy Farm. Slightly yellowish-green color, dwarf size, broad spreading shape. Requires some shade to attain its best appearance when it becomes a lustrous dark color.

**Pre-Registered and Attendees, ABS Annual Meeting May12-13, 1992**

Twenty-seven attended the workshop on Tuesday, May 12 and fifty-two attended the meetings and luncheon on Wednesday, May 13:

Mr. Lynn R. Batdorf, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Boyd, Jr., Mr. B. Porter Briggs, Mr. and Mrs. Scot Butler, Mrs. Pamela Bryne-Daigh, Mrs. Margaret Camp, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Carey, Mrs. Edward Chamberlin, Dr. Edward Connor, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cunningham, Mrs. J. Blackwell Davis and guest, Mrs. Harry A. deButts, Ms. Anna Dees, Mr. John Dingus (speaker), Mrs. Charles Dick, Mrs. Thomas W. diZerega, Ms. Margaret A. Ellmore, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fooks, Dr. Henry F. Frierson, Jr., Mr. James Gallagher, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Goode, Miss Sue Greeley, Mr. Bruce Gunnell, Mrs. Paul Haldeman, Mrs. Gerald T. Halpin, Mrs. Sigrid Harriman, Mr. and Mrs. John Hart, Ms. Cheryl Hudson, Mrs. George Hughey, Cdr. P. D. Larson, Mr. Mike Lawn (speaker), Ms. Robin Letard, Mrs. Joan Lupinski, Mr. and Mrs. R. James Macgregor, Mr. Richard D. Mahone, Ms. Sydney McDowell, Ms. Marcia Murray, Ms. Betty Nuckols, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Plater, Mr. and Mrs. John Reaves, Dr. Christopher Sacchi, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Saunders, Miss Christi Saunders, Mr. Robert E. Schenck, Mrs. Tyra Sexton, Mr. and Mrs. Howard W. Smith, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Drew Somerford, Dr. Stephen Southall, Mr. Dale T. Taylor, Mr. Donald R. Taylor, Mrs. Katherine D. Ward, Mr. Edward J. Weber, Mr. Steve Zapton.

# Boxwood Gardener

Information for boxwood enthusiasts and Society members



## A Backward Glance at The American Boxwood Society Memorial Garden

To review for new members and those unfamiliar with the area, the ABS Memorial Garden is within the Orland E. White Arboretum, part of the acreage of the Blandy Experimental Farm (founded 1926) of the University of Virginia. The arboretum has been designated the State Arboretum of Virginia, but retains the Orland E. White name. (Dr. White was the first Director of the Blandy Experimental Farm.) For more details on the ABS Memorial Garden, Blandy, and Orland E. White Arboretum see 25th Anniversary Issue, *The Boxwood Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No. 4.

At the ABS Annual Meeting, May 8, 1974, Mr. Thomas E. Ewart, then Director of Blandy, suggested that a committee be set up to implement an earlier proposed garden of the ABS boxwoods at Blandy. It was his hope that the garden might be in place by 1976, the ABS 15th anniversary and bicentennial year. The proposal was followed up with a letter to the Editor (see *The Boxwood Bulletin*, July 1974, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 2 and 5).

The ABS Memorial Garden got under way on schedule and has been enlarged over the years. Cdr. P. D. Larson, an avid boxwood promoter, undertook chairmanship of the Memorial Garden and has carried on a propagation program as well as a search for named cultivars to add the collection.

In 1989, it was announced that a new master plan was being drawn up for the Arboretum, including a new entrance from the highway, and that an amphitheater was being planned for the bowl-shaped area within the Memorial Garden, to be funded by the Friends of Blandy organization. In 1990, the ABS agreed to fund a grant for the redesign of the Memorial Garden to conform with the new master plan.

As the amphitheater plans were in place and implementing expected during the summer, the boxwood collection has been moved from the "bowl"



*ABS boxwood in topiary and other forms in holding area, awaiting their new home. (Photo D. Frackelton)*

area and heeled in. The plants will be settled into their new home as soon as grading permits.

There are now about 100 kinds of boxwood ready for display; hundreds of back-up plants are in nearby nurseries.

Word has been received that the new entrance road is under construction and we all look forward to the road completion and landscaping as a first step toward the Arboretum redesign.

*Decca Frackelton*

