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Beautiful Gardens™ Plant Introduction Program Meeting Minutes, Notes and Reports

Our recent Beautiful Gardens meeting was held Thursday, May 1, in Roanoke at the Virginia Western Community College campus in the Community Arboretum. Members of Beautiful Gardens want to thank our hosts, Lee Hipp and Clark BeCraft, for allowing us to meet at their facility.

In attendance were Dr. Rumen Conev, Jeff Miller, Doug Hensel, Fred Duis, Linda Pinkham, Rick Baker, Butch Gaddy, Bill McCaleb, Dr. Alex Niemiera, Holly Scoggins, Lisa Lipsey, Velva Groover, Barry Flinn, Sandy Miller, John Wise, Lee Hipp, and Clark BeCraft.

Doug opened the meeting at 10:15. After a brief introduction and review of the agenda, the members divided into two separate groups – the Administrative Committee and the Plant selection / Promotion Committees.

The Administrative Committee discussed the budget plan, expenditures, and new the grant application to TICRC.

The Plant Selection Committee and the Promotion Committee members discussed the final preparation for the 2009 kick off of Beautiful Gardens 'Plants of Distinction' in the participating retail garden centers. We are in the final stages of selecting and announcing the participating growers and retail garden centers. In addition, we discussed finalizing the 2010 plant promotion list as well as beginning to work on the 2011 plant selection nominees.

The Beautiful Gardens™ logo registration has passed its biggest hurdle with the patent/trademark office and is being published for public review before final approval.

Rumen is working on the possibility of another test site at the Randolph Farm at Virginia State University in Petersburg.

News releases will be developed and sent to the media and will be made available on the website.

The morning segment of the meeting lasted until 12:30.

For the afternoon we visited the gardens of Paul James. We want to thank Mr. James for a delightful visit to his exquisite gardens. All of us were mesmerized by the beauty of his plants as well as by his collection of rare and unusual plants.

- *Doug Hensel, Beautiful Gardens Committee Chair*



BEAUTIFUL GARDENS™ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

BG meeting at VA Western CC, Roanoke, May 1, 2008

Financial Sustainability:

Currently BG operates on one remaining funds from a \$145,000 Special Projects TICRC grant extended into 2008, and a \$10,000 grant from VDACS for promotion and marketing. Two new grants are to be submitted to TC: one is due on June 2, 2008, and the other – Nov 3, 2008. The first one will be submitted again to Special Projects program and will focus on covering the 1-year operational budget of Beautiful Gardens. The second one will be a collaborative effort between ISRR, VT and VNLA (other?), and will focus on developing commercial TC

propagation infrastructure and links between our program, ISRR, the commercial TC lab, and pilot projects in tobacco greenhouses for liner production of ornamental and other plants. This will be a 2-year project.

Rick Baker was successful in receiving a \$10,000 grant for marketing and promotional activities available 2007/2008, and another for the same amount for 2008/2009. It is very helpful as TC funds are strictly regulated to benefit tobacco regions only, and even to be physically spent within the tobacco regions of Southwest and Southside VA.

Partnerships:

A very important and much needed meeting was held in NBG on March 7. Don Buma, Exec. Director of the garden and the new Director of Horticulture Brian O'Neil discussed with Rumen Conev and Lisa Lipsey the scope of our collaboration. The bottom line is: The garden is supportive to BG program, will continue to provide large-scale maintenance, but is not able to provide human resources for detailed maintenance of the site. NBG is not able to expand the evaluation plot. They would appreciate if they could get some financial support through VNAHRF/BG. It was also suggested that our plants are provided to the garden for installation in the display beds, and in this case NBG will maintain them, and MG's will be given free access to evaluate them. For now we will try to better utilize the existing plot by promptly removing the plants not showing enough promise, and encouraging MG's group there to perform light maintenance as per our agreement.

A potential partnership with VSU is being explored with the ultimate goal of establishing a BG test site at Randolph farm located within the unique spot of hardiness zone 7b and heat zone 8. I am in advanced stage of communications with Dr. Glen Chappell – Asst. Professor at the Department of Agriculture and Human Ecology at VSU who stated that “it looks like we have the plot arranged”. I have suggested a meeting on-site. I will wait to assess first-hand the geographical, infrastructural, and political conditions in order to either proceed with investing in this idea or terminate it early enough if the partnership looks unreliable. I am waiting for a response to my request.

Propagation Activities and New Plants:

IALR – significant funds from the BG's current grant were transferred to IALR earmarked for hiring a TC propagator, for purchasing major equipment for the commercial TC lab, and for start-up materials and supplies. Barry Flinn is in process of recruiting a TC specialist whose first assignment will be to initiate propagation of *Lilium X 'Jocelyne's Bouquet'*, *Cornus 'Lady Fairfax'*, and *Ilex X 'Virginia'*.

Goochland – 750 cuttings from *Ilex x Virginia* have been stuck for rooting. In June –July period 2000 cuttings from *Adina rubella* are supposed to be started at Goochland propagation facility. Don Hyatt reported that he provided material from native azaleas to John Wise for propagation however I am not aware of the status of their development (if any), nor of the numbers of cuttings started (if any).

US NA - I am in advanced stage of negotiations with the National Arboretum for signing a material transfer agreement for propagation of 2 genotypes – a *Viburnum* which is supposed to be released this spring and an unreleased yet crape myrtle genotype. Also, 5 accessions of *Acer pentafillum* are being propagated by Dr. Mark Roh at NA for testing in BG.

VT – 100 dogwood seedlings are purchased, delivered at UHC, and will be budded with 'Lady Fairfax' in September. The last BG acquired plant - the variegated Pagoda dogwood overwintered well and will be propagated by budding in September. Rootstock material has been ordered. Drs. Niemiera and Conev are preparing for a trip to China in second week of October. The Department matched the funds provided by VAC which made possible the trip.

NSAC – Dr. Kris Pruski of Plant Atlantic PIP in Canada provided material in tissue culture available for propagation and testing at BG sites, as follows:

Cotoneaster bullatus, *Rhododendron 'Minas Flame'* hardy to Zone 5B:

<http://www.atlanticrhodo.org/hybrids/kentville/mflam.html> and *Philadelphus 'Starbright'* PP 18651 - a hybrid from Memorial University, Newfoundland: <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/PP18651.html>
<http://www.mun.ca/botgarden/images/content/55-826918333.jpg>

Our plant selection committee and the advisors have to recommend whether we should proceed with propagation and testing at our sites, or not - if the material is not promising.

Tobacco Greenhouse Propagation Pilot Project – a rare and very promising daylily cv. is being propagated simultaneously by Lisa Lipsey and a tobacco grower at Halifax County. Linda Pinkham developed an innovative

propagation protocol, and assisted by Bill McCaleb and Lisa Lipsey provided hands-on training to Bert Carr and his tobacco greenhouse staff.

Public Relations

Beautiful Gardens PIP will get great exposure by being featured as a VT spotlight. University spotlights are photos and articles that appear on the university's homepage. Rumen is working with Lori Grainer – the communication manager of CALS.

The Department of Horticulture may host a tour of the Green Industry Leaders on June 14. If the tour does take place it will include a visit to the Urban Horticulture Center where I am going to present Beautiful Gardens program and the collaborative research on triploid daylilies. Also, I am planning on providing a tour for VA Master Gardeners attending the MG College at Tech on June 19.

- *provided by Dr. Rumen Conev, Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture and Beautiful Gardens Executive Director*



PLANT EVALUATION SITE REPORT

By Lisa Lipsey, Program Coordinator, VA Western CC, Roanoke, May 1, 2008

HUMAN RESOURCES:

Claytor Nature Study Center, Bedford

Patti Redmond remains the organizer and driving force behind the Master Gardens at the Bedford site. During my site visit on March 31st, she was unable to meet but has reported that the group there seems happy with the revised evaluation forms and procedures. One member of the team has already revised the site map following the removal of plants no longer being evaluated and the planting of some of the new plants.

Dan Miles, the site manager for the Study Center, continues to express his support for the program and has done a tremendous job of maintaining the site. This fall he reseeded all the pathways after eliminating the Bermuda grass that was always creeping into the planted areas. Dan has agreed to prepare any beds necessary for new plantings, to mow, to watch and maintain the irrigation and to spray herbicides when needed.

I will meet Patti, Dan and other Master Gardeners again on May 14th when I bring more of the new evaluation plants for the site.

Paul C. Edmunds Park, South Boston

Our support by Master Gardeners remains strong in Halifax Co under the direction of Bill McCaleb. Sonya Post, chair of the Beautiful Gardens group, has been organizing teams for maintenance, new bed preparation, plantings and removals. When I was there on April 1st, Agnes Gregory and Sonya met me at the site. We tagged plants to be removed, determined planting locations for the new evaluation plants and we reviewed evaluation forms and procedures. Fortunately for me, the Master Gardeners were having their monthly meeting which always includes a delicious home-cooked spread. I was introduced to the group and spoke briefly about BG and what would be new in the coming year.

Urban Hort Center, Blacksburg

With the help of Barry Robinson, VCE – Montgomery Co., we now have four Master Gardeners helping at the UHC. Mickey Balconi, Nancy Cooper, Susan Parker and Ann Yousten are very enthusiastic, have begun evaluations and are willing to help with weed pulling and plantings at the site.

Velva Groover continues to help where needed at the UHC. She has maintained our trial plants and will help plan and implement the new installations. She also was instrumental in making positive changes to the plant evaluation forms.

Rumen has hired Danielle Crouse for the summer to work at the UHC. She has already contributed greatly to remapping the BG site, potting new evaluation plants, maintaining those plants, and transplanting and removing existing plants. She will also be helping with site maintenance and plant evaluation at Glade Spring.

John James, UHC manager, continues with help and support of the program. Last year, he and his help installed the irrigation and the shade structure. This year, they are removing the large plant material from the BG site so we should have plenty of room now for new evaluations.

SWVA – AREC, Glade Spring

Currently, we have no Master Gardeners helping at Glade Spring. I have contacted Phil Blevins, Extension Agent for Washington Co., sent him a brief description of the BG program and MGs role, and asked if he might know of any MGs interested in helping with our site. He has not responded.

Velva Groover, Danielle Crouse and I will be responsible for data collection and most of the site maintenance. Lee Wright, the site manager, will mow and will run the irrigation at the site.

Norfolk Botanical Gardens, Norfolk

I will be visiting Norfolk on April 28th to speak with Lynnette Swanson, Extension Agent for the City of Norfolk, about the role of Master Gardeners at Norfolk. There has been confusion and misunderstanding about who is responsible for what. She has indicated that there still are Master Gardeners interested in continuing with the BG program.

SITE DEVELOPMENT:

Claytor Nature Study Center, Bedford

All plants that are no longer being evaluated have been removed from the site by Dan Miles and Dean Wilson, one of the Master Gardeners.

On March 31st, the following new plants were installed by myself and Dan:

- *Acer shir.* 'Autumn Moon'(E) & *Acer siebold.* 'Sode No Uchi'(C)
- *Camellia* 'Autumn Rocket'(E) and *Camellia* 'Northern Lights' (C)
- *Corylopsis spicata* 'Ogon'(E)
- *Edgeworthia chrysantha*(E)
- *Hydrangea macro.* 'Fuji Waterfall'(E)
- *Nerium* 'Hardy Red'(C) and *Nerium* 'Double Yellow'(C)
- *Rhododendron Arborescens* 'White Lightening'(E) & *Rhododendron Arborescens*(C)
- *Hakonechloa macra* 'All Gold'(E) & *Carex osh.* 'Evergold'(C)
- *Hemerocallis* 'Buttered Popcorn'(E)
- *Hemerocallis* 'Moonlit Masquerade'(E)

The remaining new plants on our spring 2008 trial list will all be arriving at VT between now and the end of April. I have planned another trip to Bedford on May 14th to complete the plantings.

Paul C. Edmonds Park, South Boston

On my April 1st visit, I brought the plants as listed above. It had rained the previous day so we were unable to plant. The Master Gardeners will be planting when the ground dries.

Urban Hort Center, Blacksburg

Plants no longer in the evaluation have been removed making space for new plantings. We will organize a planting day with Master Gardeners in the next couple of weeks to plant the new plants for trials.

SWVA – AREC, Glade Spring

We have made substantial progress at the Glade Spring evaluation site. A group of 5 from Virginia Tech (J. James, J. Freeborn, Velva, Danielle, and Lisa), Lee Wright, and his crew have worked to finish the shade structure, to complete the installation of the irrigation system, remulch planting beds, attempt to control the thistle problem with post-emergent herbicide, seed pathways and prepare new planting beds. This site should be ready for new plantings by the end of April.

Norfolk Botanical Gardens, Norfolk

In a meeting with Don Buma, Director and Brian O'Neil, Director of Horticulture, it was determined that the Gardens did not want to expand the current Beautiful Gardens site. They were not happy with the weedy appearance of the beds last year, and expressed to us that they do not have the resources to maintain with no financial support from BG. A suggestion was made by Don Buma to plant our new evaluation plants among the Garden's collections where they would be maintained with the Garden's plants.

This site remains questionable until the issue with the Master Gardeners is resolved. We do have plants in containers that were delivered last fall and over-wintered in their cold frame.

NEW EVALUATION PLANTS ACQUISITION:

The majority of the new plant acquisitions are looking great. Those that were purchased in the fall of 2007 over-wintered well with the exception of the two Hydrangeas purchased from Nurseries Caroliniana. Ten ? of the 25 plants of *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Fuji Waterfall' did not survive, so I have decided to plant only two plants per site. Only three *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Hatsushimo' of 25 plants are showing any signs of life. There may be three possible reasons for the poor over-wintering of the hydrangea. The plants could have remained too moist through the winter although the irrigation in the cold frame was turned off; the plants, particularly the 'Hatsushimo', were planted too deep in the container; and another thought is that the plants may not be hardy in zone 6a, although the winter was relatively mild in Blacksburg this year.

New plants are arriving weekly and are being stored in the cold frames at the UHC. Some of the plants required repotting, and we will hold these plants until they begin showing new growth. All the plants to be planted at the trial sites should arrive by the end of April.

PLANT EVALUATIONS:

The plant evaluation forms were revised according to input we received from Master Gardeners and from our own observations. The goal was to make the forms more user-friendly so that we would receive more data. Last year, much of the data was missing or incomplete. I have been speaking with Master Gardeners at Norfolk, Bedford and South Boston about the use of the forms and the importance of having complete data. Their response has been positive, most saying the forms are now e. They know they can contact me at any time if they have questions or concerns.

PLANT PROPAGATION:

I was contacted by Hoyt March, Horton Nursery in Suffolk, about the possibility of growing plants for the BG program. He was also interested in growing liners. I sent him information on a few nurseries that would carry liners and asked him to contact Rick Baker about becoming a grower.

Propagation has begun on *Hemerocallis* 'Shores of Time' in hopes of building numbers for a 2011 promotion. Fans were given by Linda and were purchased from Bell's Garden so we would have 30 fans to begin. Fifteen fans will be propagated by Bert Carr, a tobacco farmer in Halifax Co., with the help of Linda, me and Bill McCaleb. I will propagate the other fifteen fans under the guidance of Linda. The hope is to produce 1000 – 2000 fans that would be available to growers by October 15, 2010.

- provided by Lisa Lipsey, Beautiful Gardens Program Coordinator