



Minutes: Beautiful GardensTM Taskforce

*Virginia Department of Forestry, Charlottesville,
Room: 2054; Friday, March 18, 2007, 10:00-4:00*

10:00 am – Call to order – Fred Duis called the meeting to order with the following attendees: Doug Hensel, Rumen Conev, Alex Niemiera, Karen Kelly, Don Hyatt, Butch Gaddy, Rick Baker, Linda Pinkham, Jeff Miller, Jerzy Nowak, Bill McCaleb, Barry Flinn, Dick and Judith Tyler, and Rich Johnson.

MINUTES –Fred Duis/Jeff Miller – A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2007 at JCRCC, Goochland, VA, seconded, passed.

TREASURER’S REPORT – Jeff Miller – presented a revised grant Budget 2007.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Dr. Rumen Conev – Are we ready for 2007 season? (see attached report)

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration: Jeff Miller/Fred Duis – Status of trademark registration – it was the consensus to recommend to our trademark attorney to offer \$600 for the rights to the currently registered version by another company with a 30 day window to accept. Rick will chair the committee to select a tag line to go with the Beautiful GardensTM.

Marketing and Promotion: Rick Baker – Action plan (see attached report)

Research & Development: Drs. Barry Flinn/Rumen Conev – reported that they had developed daylily triploid germplasm with 128 crosses in 2005 and 382 in 2006. They have developed an embryo rescue procedure and plants are being prepared for planting out for growing in field evaluation.

They are working on:

- Deciduous Native Azalea Propagation in vitro shoot growth establishment.
- High Throughput Helleborus Propagation – have developed a protocol to produce massive shoots from single shoot base using the combination of auxins and cytokinins.
- DNA markers linked to rust resistance in daylily

All the new labs are functional and a 9,000 s.f. greenhouse will be constructed at the IALR in Danville this summer with 3,000 s.f. available for PIP.

Plant Evaluation: Rumen Conev – reported on the 2006 results. There were reporting issues resulting in no definitive results in the first year of evaluations. There is a need additional shade at all of the sites.

- **Plant Selection: Linda Pinkham** – Recent promotion and evaluation plant lists:
- *Cercis Canadensis* ‘Hearts of Gold’ 2010
- *Buxus sempervirens*, ‘Dee Runk’ 2010
- *Buxus* Green Velvet 2009

- *Ilex* x 'Virginia' 2009
- *Azalea* 'Fairfax' 2011
- *Azalea* 'Wagner's White Spider' (Rarefind Nursery) and in 2010 Shikabo white
- *Euphorbia* 'Tasmanium Tiger' NOT
- *Helleborus x ericsmithii* with a BG named plant. 2010
- *Helleborus* 'Pine Knot' 2009
- *Hemerocallis* 'Ageless Beauty' 2010
- *Agapanthus* 'Monmid' Midnight Blue, hardy to 5a or 6, to rename 'Blue Ridge'
- *Hakonechloa aureomaculata*, gold in the shade
- *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Snowflake'
- *Cornus angustata* 'Empress of China'; Hardiness?

Will send list to growers to review and give thoughts within 2 weeks.

Tissue Culture propagation: Dr. Jerzy Nowak – discussed facilities, resources, model of integration; and suggested consideration of naming rights donations to test sites. There is funding for Rumen's assistant with \$36k from TIRC grant and \$20k from the VNLA contribution. The lily tissue culture propagation will begin as soon as an assistant is hired.

WORKSESSION:

Committees Revision: Advisory, Admin., Production –Fred /Rumen

Contractual agreements for BG growers/retailers – Fred /Rick;

Discussion and Short-listing plants for 2009 promotion – Linda

Timelines for plant evaluation, plant promotion, & plant propagation - Fred

OLD BUSINESS: Lily name selection: Pink Profusion, Pink Bouquet, not finalized.

NEW BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION (TBA at the National Arboretum in July)

4:00 pm – Adjourn

VNLA Plant Introduction Committee Beautiful Gardens™ Planning Session

Report by Rick Baker; March 16, 2007

Action Items

March 2007 - March 2009

- Final selection for plants to be released in spring 2009
- Selection of plants for planting at evaluation sites spring 2007
- Grower Contracts – Yes/No – Write Up
- Grower fee – license fee
- Contact and select initial group of growers
- Continuing search for "new" plants
- Identify independent garden centers to participate in spring 2009 – get their input
- Work with FSMIP (\$40,000) and Special Crops grants if awarded
- Do growers have all the plants they need to finish for spring 2009
- Exhibit at MANTS 2008
- Plants for evaluation for 2009
- Finalize promotional materials – plant tags, retail poster, consumer handouts, banners, etc
- Status of plants being grown for 2009 release – monitor quality, size
- Coordinate growers and retailers on movement/sale of plants for spring 2009
- Begin media promotions for 2009 release in 2008
- Plant tags to growers Fall '08
- Display at MANTS
- Retail promotional materials distributed – retailers coached on promoting BG plants Spring '09
- Plants delivered and sales monitored spring 2009

Report on Plant Performance in 2006

By Dr. Rumen Coney, Exec. Director, VPIP

Please note that only 4 out of 5 sites submitted reports. Among submitted almost all evaluation sheets are from incomplete to entirely empty.

Acer 'Jamestown': Inconclusive.

Halifax: ranked lower than the standard Oct. Glory;

Bedford: ranked lower than Oct. Glory;

Washington: slightly higher ranking compared to Oct. Glory;

Blacksburg: it defoliated much earlier than the control, again.

Athyrium 'Ghost': Inconclusive.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: Ranked lower than the standard - Lady Fern;

Washington (no shade): Both are low ranked, standard slightly better;

Blacksburg (no shade): Ranked much lower than comparison plant.

Hosta 'Sagae': Inconclusive.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: ranked lower than Francee;

Washington (no shade): both about the same low ranking;

Blacksburg (no shade): pretty similar low ranking.

Sarcococca confusa: Inconclusive.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: significantly underrated compared to *S. hookeriana*;

Washington: Lower rated than the standard (no shade);

Blacksburg: similar performance (no shade).

Cephalotaxus haringtonia 'Duke Gardens': Inconclusive.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: Ranked overall much lower than the standard - *Taxus densiformis*;

Washington: Ranked much lower than the standard as well;

Blacksburg: both 'Duke Gardens' plants died, *T. densiformis* ranked high;

Ilex 'Virginia': Inconclusive.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: The standard was preferred overall;

Washington: the evaluated plant got lower rating than *Ilex* 'Nelly Stevens';

Blacksburg: Both the standard and evaluated plants ranked high.

Aquilegia 'Virginia': Positive. We do not have a comparison plant for this genotype.

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: highest rank possible however lost 2 out of 8 plants;

Washington: good overall (4 out of 5);

Blacksburg: very highly ranked.

Stokesia 'Pichie's Pick': Positive (?)

Halifax: no data;

Bedford: The standard 'Klaus Jellito' ranked slightly higher;

Washington: The same - a slight preference given to the comparison plant;

Blacksburg: Both highly ranked.

NB: None of the plants under evaluation over perform significantly and consistently the comparison plant. In many cases there is even a clear preference given to the comparison plant.

Executive Director's Report; VDF, Charlottesville, March 16'2007; By Dr. Rumen Coney, Exec. Director, VPIP

Executive Director's Report

I. Completed Work:

1. MANTS meeting provided a great opportunity to receive growers' feedback on many aspects of our program - do they buy-in it? Do they support our plant choices, our goals, our promotional deadlines, the concept of participation, etc? We are planning the BG meeting with growers/retailers at MANTS to become a regular event and the most important annual reporting and planning meeting for the program.
2. As a reflection to the '07 MANTS meeting, the BG core group met at JSRCC, Goochland on Feb 15'07. We have made strategic decisions to further focus and improve our work.
3. Our Plant Selection Committee spearheaded by Linda Pinkham initiated a complete revision of our promotion plant list in order to address the suggestions made by nursery representatives at MANTS. The starting point was a list of 216 plant nominations, with our previously selected top 9 choices included. The committee managed to narrow their nominations to a list of Top-30, and is working on preparing a Top-10 list.
4. We have drafted a time frame to be followed in all three major directions: plant evaluation, plant propagation, and plant promotion from Feb '07 to Mar'09.
5. We have revised our Tobacco Commission Grant budget '07 moving more funds into promotion activities, as well as for supporting a propagator position in relation to launching a mid-scale TC propagation tab at Clover Hollow Greenhouse complex in Giles County.
6. Establishing a new mid-size TC propagation facility is underway. Planning and preparation work is in progress. The facility - a lab, adjacent offices, storage, service rooms, and a section of a cutting-edge glasshouse will be under Dr. Coney's direct supervision. This facility will be equipped utilizing primarily funds from Virginia Tech's Ornamental Plant Breeder's start-up budget.
7. A new conventional propagation facility is being developed in JSRCC near Richmond,, under supervision of the Horticulture lead in the College - Mr. David Seward, and with the involvement of our Plant Selection Committee Member John Wise. Our goal is by April 1 2007 all VNLA plants currently in LGBG to be moved to and finished for planting in the BG propagation facility at JSRCC.
8. The status of our application for trademark registration of our brand name has been clarified, and one of our top priorities is to make a decision on how to proceed in order to finalize this process as soon as possible to a positive outcome.
9. Most of germplasm for the '07 evaluation is secured: *Lilium* x 'Pink Bouquet', *Chionanthus virginicus* 'Spring Fleecing' and 'Emerald Knight', plus seedlings for comparison, 6 oleander cultivars bred in Texas are ready for planting and some were already distributed (Blacksburg and Glade Spring). Plants for comparison have to be purchased ASAP - lily (?) and oleander (Hardy Red and/or Double Yellow?) *Cornus florida* 'Lady Fairfax' will be grafted this spring for testing as of 2008.

II. Work in progress:

Germplasm acquisition: Established contact with Dr. Ralph Scorza - a prominent *Prunus* breeder at the USDA-ARS Appalachian FRS in Kearneysville, WV. He has one of the richest collections of ornamental peaches. A visit is being planned in blooming time. Mike Graham from Graham and Allen Nursery offered a donation of a selected sport of *Ilex glabra* with fine leaves. Potentially interesting for expansion of our future sales to the northern states.

Human resources: Almost all the sites Manassas, Norfolk, Bedford, Richmond, and Washington experienced significant disturbances in labor force because of difficulties caused by various

factors. The situation now is fragile but relatively stable. We were successful in recruiting a group of 14 new Master Gardeners in Norfolk, 8 - in Washington and 1 in Blacksburg.

Infrastructure maintenance and development: The most pressing issues are connecting the on-ground tubing of the irrigation systems in Bedford, and Halifax; building the irrigation system in Glade Spring, building shade structures in Glade Spring and Blacksburg, and installing shade cloth in all sites. The Glade Spring site manager gave his word that the shade structure there will be done by the end of next week, with the irrigation system to follow, the week after that. Urban Horticulture Center has a plan to build a shade structure this spring as well.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

- We are in pretty good shape regarding financial resources. A potential success of Rick's applications to 2 federal funding sources could contribute significantly for increasing our marketing and promotion capabilities.
- Master Gardeners participating in our program need ongoing encouragement, an optimized working environment (less hard work, more fun doing observations), providing networking opportunities, refreshing seminars and continuing training. Their evaluation activities, data collection and entry, as well as record keeping and recording need ongoing supervision.
- Our pre-selection of plants entering the pipeline need improvement - many of our plants in testing now does not perform consistently well, and many of them seem to have poor adaptation potential. We have to not test that much, but to rather prove our selections' superiority to what is out there. If we continue with evaluating 15-16 plants a year, we need at least 50-60 % of them to be winners, in order to feed our list of 8-10 plants for promotion. Otherwise we will have to do every year the same what we are doing now - searching hectically to promote germplasm not tested by us.
- Plant evaluation data collecting and reporting: both need serious improvement!