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## ***Minutes – Beautiful Gardens Committee***

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*Tuesday, October 23, 2007, at J.S. Reynolds Community College, Goochland*

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m. with the following people present: Linda Pinkham, Bill McCaleb, Barry Flinn, Karen Kelly, David Seward, Rick Baker, Neal Beasley, Jack Campbell, Don Hyatt, John Wise, Fred Duis, Velva Groover, Lisa Lipsey, Rumen Conev, Jeff Miller and Greg Eaton.

**Minutes** – Linda Pinkham gave a summary review of the minutes of the last meeting, July 29, 2007 which was held at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC.

**Executive Director Report** – Rumen Conev introduced Lisa Lipsey and Velva Grover who will be working on Beautiful Gardens projects. Rumen gave an executive director's update. (see complete written report at the end of these minutes.)

He discussed issues with maintenance and coordination with the Glade Springs site. He is working with Marie Dills at HRAREC to help coordinate activities at HRAREC and at Norfolk Botanical Gardens. He is looking into hand-held computers to use to record site data.

**Program Coordinator Report** - Lisa reported on site development and maintenance. She is visiting the NBG site on Wednesday for the first time. Shade cloth will be installed at the test sites in the spring. She will be working with the Master Gardeners to provide additional support to them. It was suggested to offer CEU's for VCH who help with the work and evaluations at the BG sites. Fred suggested promoting plant breeding workshops with the Master Gardeners. A presentation review of site plants will be made at the next meeting. Attached at the end of the minutes is Lisa's plant list.

**Research report** - Dr. Barry Flinn, ISSR IALR in Danville, reported on the current status of the daylily lily crosses and the embryonic rescue process. Blooming plants were produced this summer in Linda Pinkham's trial beds. Diploid daylilies are on the market, which can be crossed with triploids but you have to do embryo rescue. They are looking to see if sterility in daylilies results in more and/or longer re-bloom.

They continue to work on in vitro micro-propagation for *Helleborus niger* and *x hybridus*.

Initial in vitro shoot growth establishment of azaleas was reviewed along with in vitro de novo shoot growth establishment on "White Spyder" azalea leaves.

DNA markers linked to daylily rust resistance have been established.

Barry gave an update on the status of the new tissue culture propagation lab at the ILAR in Danville, which should be ready for use by the end of December 2007. The new greenhouse should also be under construction by the end of December and completed by June 2008 for commercial production of tissue culture plants.

**2008 Plant Promotion** – Rick Baker reported on the grower participation in the Beautiful Gardens program. We need to convince grower to grow and retailers to sell. (See complete report at the end of these minutes.)

**Plant Selection Committee** – Linda Pinkham reviewed some on the plants in the BG program and some of the plants on future promotion list. This committee will meet after the general BG Committee meeting to work on the 2010 promotion plant list.

**The next Beautiful Gardens Committee Meeting** will be on Wednesday, January 9, at 3 pm at the

Baltimore Convention Center during MANTS with a introduction meeting for growers and retailers at 4 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm

*Respectively submitted, Jeff Miller*

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## MEETING REPORTS

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### *Beautiful Gardens<sup>tm</sup> Executive Director's Update*

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*Dr. Rumen Conev, Oct 23 2007, JSRCC, Goochland, VA*

#### **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Beautiful Gardens is building the pipeline for smooth transfer to self-sustaining and meanwhile two new projects have been developed by Rumen Conev in the last 2 months. A grant proposal for \$112,000 has been submitted in mid-August'07 to the Special Projects program of TICRC, and another proposal for 2-year \$324,000 project will be submitted on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 to Agribusiness program of TICRC. The first grant targeted mainly continuation of germplasm acquisition, plant evaluation and Marketing and Promotion activities of Beautiful Gardens in 2008. The second grant focuses on enabling a commercial scale tissue culture facility in Danville in early 2008, and retrofitting 2 model tobacco greenhouses for liner production in 2008 and 2009. The second grant is a collaborative effort of Drs. Nowak and Conev from the Department of Horticulture at VA Tech, and Flinn of ISRR, Danville, with the assistance of experts from the AgEcon Department at VT. The first grant (Special Projects Program) has not been recommended for financing because of large amount of the last grant's budget is still available, and because the TC lab and greenhouse facility in Danville are not going to be ready soon, so the new TC propagator (if meanwhile hired) would be located in VT campus i.e. out of tobacco region. The decision regarding the second grant (Agribusiness Program) will be announced on January 8, 2008. R. Conev had a phone conversation with Tim Pfohl - Grants Program Administration Manager at TC and has been encouraged to apply to both – the Agribusiness Program in Nov '07 and to the extra-round of Special Projects Grants in spring '08.

#### **NEW PLANTS ACQUISITION**

The summer of 2007 was dynamic and very successful for Beautiful Gardens<sup>TM</sup>.

Conev works closely with Dr. Alex Niemiera in locating unique plant material hold by former VT Horticulture graduates. Rumen has recently finalized the negotiations for acquisition of a variegated Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), discovered by Peter Thomasson of Blacksburg, VA. The ownership of the germplasm has been transferred to Beautiful Gardens<sup>TM</sup> program with a naming rights and royalty sharing agreement. The suggested name is "Silk and Honey". Although quite late for budding and grafting I immediately did some very limited propagation for purifying and stabilizing the chimera, with more budding/grafting to be done in 2008. The owner of the variegated oak stated in written his will to transfer the rights when/if the plant recovers from an accidental Roundup spray. Several other variegated plants are on target for acquisition in 2008.

The Magnolia breeder Bill Smith has donated all his 2006-07 hybrids from his Richmond based breeding program to Beautiful Gardens. As the program works with pre-selected and initially tested material, the Magnolia germplasm was transported from Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden to the Urban Horticulture Center at VA Tech, to be overwintered in cold frame house and planted in the breeding plot in the spring of 2008 for evaluation and selection by Conev and his technician Velva Groover.

A germplasm transfer agreement with USDA-ARS' station in Kearneysville, West Virginia have been achieved as well. Velva and Rumen have evaluated on site the summer ornamental display of 30 potentially interesting ornamental peach accessions, collected and transported budwood, and T-budded 250 rootstocks in the Urban Hort. Center In Blacksburg.

Our new Program Coordinator Lisa Lipsey delivered exactly what the consortium really needed: in her first months on board she drastically improved our reach to commercial sources of rare plant material for testing. We are making an excellent progress on locating and acquiring germplasm for the evaluation trials in 2008, as well as plants from previous evaluation lists which have not been found and purchased so far. Furthermore, in anticipation of starting our own in-program commercial scale propagation we were able to secure all of the plants on Beautiful Gardens' tentative 2010 Promotion list. This material will serve as mother stock for initiation of tissue culture propagation and

liner production in Virginia. In this way we will be able to plan and control from the very beginning of the process the quantity, distribution and quality of the material for sale in 2010.

I would like to express our appreciation for the generous donations of plants for testing from Bennett's Creek Nursery and Saunders Brothers, and for the special discount offered by Lazy S'S Farm Nursery and Acer Acres. Thank you all!

## **BUSINESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

People holding plants with unique characteristics usually establish contact with the program's director shortly after an oral presentation on BG Plant Introduction Program or exhibitions with banner display and brochure distribution, both of which I continue do assertively deliver across the Commonwealth of Virginia and nationally. This is a clear proof that ongoing presenting across the country does work as a method of spreading the word out, and that our brochures are also an excellent way to reach out for new germplasm.

The popularity of our web site is increasing: (Table 1) and our presence on the Internet helps us for a better coverage in building awareness regarding our program in Virginia, nationally and internationally.

Table 1 – Statistics for *www.beautifulgardens.org* web site

	Visits, total*	Page views**	Pages/visit
July 2007	1125	1490	1.32
Aug 2007	1142	1919	1.68
Sep 2007	1336	1771	1.33

\* Top referrer domains are: *google.com, vlna.org, yahoo.com, live.com*

\*\* Top visited pages are: BG Index, PromoPlants 2009, and PromoPlants 2010

One of the interesting facts is that lately the statistics of the top 10 referrer domains shows that first 5 are America based, however 4 from the rest 5 are in Europe, Australia, India, and Canada: *google.co.uk, google.fr, google.com.au, google.com.in, and google.ca*. Number 10 on the list is *vt.edu* – obviously the link to BG program on Rumen's faculty web page also helps a bit...

Dr. Conev continues to build a net of future collaborators: Dr. Kris Pruski – Associate Professor at NSAC, Nova Scotia have been invited by Jerzy Nowak to visit VT Department of Horticulture and give a presentation on PLANT ATLANTIC – a plant introduction program co-founded by him and Drs. Wilf Nichols and Todd Boland of the Botanical Gardens at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Canada. The program focuses on development of new and promoting under-used plants for the Atlantic Canadian nursery, greenhouse and habitat remediation industry. On October 5 '07 Dr. Ralph Scorza from the USDA station in Kearneysville, WV and Dr. Dongyan Hu – a visiting scientist from Beijing Botanical Gardens were Conev's guests at VA Tech and Dr. Hu gave a presentation for faculty, staff and students on her curatorship of the world's richest ornamental peach collection. Dr. Hu invited Conev for a visit to Beijing Botanical Gardens in 2008 and stated her commitment to provide unlimited access to the germplasm collections in the garden. Dr. Tom Raney of NCSU station in Fletcher, NC invited Conev to visit and give presentation on his breeding objectives and Beautiful Gardens program. Rumen continue to travel and participate the major horticulture conferences and trade shows in the US with SNA Forum in August, and Southern Plant Conference in September being the most recent to attend. These events proved to be very prolific in establishing contacts as an initial step towards developing stable professional collaborations.

## **PLANT EVALUATION**

The only site which provided written data for this meeting was Bedford. I realize that it was a too short notice for all the sites, and expect for our MANTS meeting to have data from South Boston, Blacksburg and Norfolk. Lisa and did not get any response so far from Glade Spring MGs.

*Adina rubella*, Chinese Buttonbush, has been outstanding. Positive features are showy red stems, attractive shiny leaves, no losses, absolutely no pests and diseases so far, attractive unusual blooms and fruit. *Stokesia* 'Peachie's Pick' has been an excellent performer. It has a bushier habit than 'Klaus Jellito', the comparison plant. It starts to bloom later, but it continues until frost, which is a big plus. *Callistemon sieberi*, which John Wise said he had originally secured from the Strybling Arboretum in San Francisco, seems quite promising. It is a prostrate spreading bottlebrush from Australia/New Zealand with small pastel lemon-yellow flowers. It warrants more watching,

especially for cold hardiness. Two viburnums show promise: *Viburnum plicatum* is very attractive, although had never bloomed and *V. prunifolium* with its red new growth. *Cephalotaxus* 'Duke Gardens' is looking good now, even though some plants were originally lost.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

A task of immediate concern should be to prepare the BG's group vision and position for the January 2008 BG Taskforce meeting at MANTS, the VNLA membership breakfast, and the following Open forum of the BG Board with VA Green industry representatives and all the parties interested to participate in propagation, growing, and marketing our products. More preliminary work directly with industry members is needed to enhance their "buy-in" into the program. We also need a clearer propagation strategy and transparent plans – for both limited conventional and mass- micropropagation.

I would recommend our board to consider gradually shifting towards an increased professional assistance in data collection.

Potential sites for future meetings/visits and inspiration for new plants entering into the program: Paul James's gardens in Boones Mill, Alex Niemiera's Garden in Blacksburg, Longwood Gardens in PA, National Arboretum, DC.

It may be a time for a new Strategic Planning Meeting – the first and only one was in Wintergreen on Dec 6-7, 2007. Many and significant changes happened since then, and even more are going to happen in the very near future.

# Beautiful Gardens Plant Introduction Program

## Fall 2007 Plant List

Lisa Lipsey, BG Program Coordinator

### 2010 PROMOTION PLANTS

species	type	have	source	qty	size	notes
Adina rubella	P	Y				in trials
Buxus macrophylla var. japonica 'Morris Midget'	P	Y	Saunders Brothers	10	3g	overwinter UHC
Buxus sempervirens 'Dee Runk'	P	Y	"	5	3'	overwinter UHC
Cercis canadensis 'Hearts of Gold'	P	Y	"	8	15g	overwinter UHC
Corylopsis spicata 'Ogon'	P	Y	N.Caroliniana	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Helleborus x (Ericsmithii)	P	Y	Pine Knot	?	?	Linda P acquire in spring

### 2008 PLANTS FOR TRIALS

Acer shirasawanum 'Autumn Moon'	E	Y	Acer Acres	10	1g	pick up spring '08
Acer jap. 'Sodonichi'? or pseudo sieboldiana ?	C	Y	"	10	1g	pick up spring '08
Camellia 'Autumn Rocket'	E	Y	Bennett's Ck	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Camellia 'Northern Lights'	C	Y	"	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Corylopsis spicata 'Ogon'	E	Y	N.Caroliniana			see above
Corylopsis spicata	C	Y	Lazy SS	25	qt	ship spring '08
Cryptomeria japonica 'Winter Mint'	E	N				check Pender Nursery
Cryptomeria ?	C					Yoshino ?
Hakonechloa macra 'All Gold'	E	Y	Lazy SS	25	4"	overwinter UHC
Carex oshimensis 'Evergold'	C	Y	Riverbend	25	4"	get in spring '08
Hemerocallis 'Buttered Popcorn'	E	Y	Lazy SS	25	4"	overwinter UHC
Hemerocallis 'Moonlit Masquerade'	E	Y	Lazy SS	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Fuji Waterfall'	E	Y	N Caroliniana	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Hatsushimo'	E	Y	N Caroliniana	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Ilex x 'Robin' tm Pollinator ?	E	N	Hawksridge		15g	\$52.00 e ?
Lagerstroemia indica 'Tightwad'	E	Y	Lancaster Fm	25	1g	reserved for spring '08
Lagerstroemia indica 'Chickasaw'	E	Y	Lancaster Fm	25	1g	reserved for spring '08
Lagerstroemia indica 'Cherry Dazzle'	C	Y	Bennett's Ck	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Leptodermis oblonga	E	Y	Bluestone	25	4"	ordered for spring ship
Oreganum vulgare	C	Y	Riverbend	25	4"	get in spring '08
Panicum amerum 'Dewey Blue'	E	N	Hoffman		Plug	can order for spring
Nerium 'Double Yellow'	E	Y	Almost Eden	25	1g	overwinter UHC
Nerium 'Hardy Red'	E	Y	Almost Eden	25	1g	overwinter UHC

## PLANTS FROM 2005 LIST

species	type	have	source	qty	size	notes
Amelanchier laevis 'Forest Prince'	E	N	Don Shadow		br	check JF Schmidt
			931-967-6059			
Azalea arborescens 'White Lightening'	E	Y	Rare Find	20	1g	ship spring '08 ?
Azalea arborescens	C	Y	Rare Find	20	1g	ship spring '08 (cost = \$1050.00)
Azalea 'Fairfax'	E	N	Don Hyatt			
Edgeworthia chrysantha 'Gold Rush'	E	N	Piroche			Available fall 2008?
Edgeworthia chrysantha	C	N	Hawksridge		7g	\$38.50 e
Oenothera drummondii (Calylophus)	E	N				Invasive?
Oenothera 'Lemon Drop' pp ?			Plant Delights			\$12.00

### KEY

P = Promotion Plant

E = Evaluation Plant

C = Comparison Plant

#### Donated Plants

Bennett's Creek donated the 50 Camellia & 25 Lag. 'Cherry Dazzle'

Saunders' Brothers donated the 10 Buxus 'Morris Midget' & 5 Buxus 'Dee Runk'

Lazy S'S discounted our order

#### Questions

Order Ilex x 'Robin' from Hawksridge? Pollinators?

Panicum 'Dewey Blue' ? Sporobolus heterolepis ?

Acquire plants on the 2005 List ?

#### Cost of Plants

Amount spent to date \$2852.00

Estimate of cost for spring 2008 \$3500.00\*

- for plants on 2008 list only

-provided by Lisa Lipsey

## *Marketing Committee*

*Rick Baker, VDACS Marketing*

### Grower Comments

- how will overlap of popular plants to retailers be handled?
- are Agapanthus and banana hardy to zone 6?
- if we sell all our inventory of a plant or plants we have positioned for BG are we bound by contract or agreement?
- will those first to "sign on" be given retail sales priority and first access to "new" introductions?
- concern that BG will be lost in the growing numbers of "branded" plant products
- Is *Ilex* x 'Virginia' an *opaca* or simply a hybrid?
- No one had heard of *Ilex* x 'Virginia'
- Why "Snowflake" Hydrangea?
- Where can growers get Agapanthus and Hardy Banana?
- Why Green Velvet – very popular and widely sold?
- Do we need BG tags for all these plants (2009 releases) we sell?
- BG Timeline for 2009 Sales

Rick Baker will:

- Continue to contact growers through fall, winter and spring for 2009 and beyond
- I'll be making selected contacts with tobacco growers
- Start making contacts with independent Virginia retail garden centers this fall and winter
- Final design and pricing for BG plant tags – print summer 2008 – a separate tag design for each plant set up charges
- Design, price and consider POP (point of purchase) materials for participating garden Centers
- Arrange for “free” advertising and promotion of BG going to market in spring 2009
- Work with growers to make sure they have sources of plant material
- Work with growers to make sure we have adequate inventory of each plant
- Quality control – discuss

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## ***Beautiful Gardens Timeline 2008-2010***

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*Rick Baker, VDACS Marketing*

- Fall 2008 – finalize list of participating garden centers – do we allow sales beyond this group i.e. established grower retail buyers
- Media push spring 2009
- Spring 2009 – encourage “BG Displays” in participating garden centers
- Winter / Spring 2009 – sell tags to growers
- Spring 2009 – oversee delivery and set up of BG plants at garden centers
- Spring 2009 – Wish us good planning and a little luck!
- 2008 – 2009 – Continue to work on 2010 list and work toward great “new plant” introductions in the years ahead

## **BG Participating Growers as of 10/23/07**

Have contacted by phone – FAX – e-mail and in person over 50 VNLA growers

This is a “very” busy time of year . . .

Have gotten commitments from some (yes & no) with many to keep contacting

Some were familiar with BG – some had heard or read about BG – some did not know

Several growers were interested, but sell mostly out of state

Saunders Bothers

Green Velvet – Steeple Chase – Peachie’s Pick – Hardy Banana – Don Egolf

Riverbend Nursery

Will decide what they are growing at their 2009 planning meeting in November

Ingleside Plantation

Green Velvet – Steeple Chase

Sandy’s Plants

Considering

Tankard Nurseries

Green Velvet – Steeple Chase – Virginia Holly (needs source)  
Offered greenhouse space for propagation

Waynesboro Nurseries

Considering

Sold out of Green Velvet for 2008 – very popular

Willow Springs Tree Farm

Considering Steeple Chase

Eastern Shore Nursery

Wants to support project

Green Velvet – Don Egolf – Snowflake (why)

Fred Duis

Green Velvet – Steeple Chase – Peachie's Pick – Don Egolf

Shreckhise

Steeple Chase – Green Velvet ? – Don Egolf

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*provided by Rick Baker*