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of Wake Forest University

# Gardener's

WINTER 2005

JOURNAL

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MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA

## Winter in Reynolda Woods

by David Bare, greenhouse manager

In winter, a walk in the woods reveals secrets that summer has concealed. What is not seen in the light of a summer day fairly jumps out at you in the winter landscape.

The most dominant features in the bare landscape of the Reynolda woods are the evergreen shrubs and trees that have migrated from the gardens over the years through the courtesy of birds and other creatures, which spread them by seed. Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora* and American holly, *Ilex opaca* are both native throughout the South, but both were also planted in the gardens and vicinity. More exotic evergreens threaten to eventually domi-

## Gourds Engulf the Garden

by John Kiger, assistant manager

The 2004 growing season found me wishing to produce something new in the vegetable garden. But what could that possibly be? After searching through several seed catalogs, I turned my attention to gourds.

I could see that most varieties would require some sort of trellis system. Before I could construct the trellis for gourds to grow on, I would have to choose one certain variety, since that would dictate the type of structure I would need to build. Spacing and trellising of gourds vary. Some, such as the small ornamental types, need only be spaced eighteen to twenty-four inches apart, with a vertical climb of six to eight feet. Larger varieties require much larger spaces and a heavier trellising system, often consisting of heavy post and support cross pieces.

Until I focused on gourds, I had no idea there were so many to choose from. These tender annuals, which are closely related to melons, cucumbers, and squash, have been grown for centuries and used as storage containers and utensils and for ornamental purposes. Varieties such as bottle, dipper, and martin gourds are considered large and would fall into the category of utility, since they can be used to the benefit of man and nature. Smaller varieties, such as egg, apple, and bell, often find their place in flower

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**WINTER IN REYNOLDA WOODS**

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nate the native vegetation, including Japanese privet, *Ligustrum japonicum*; thorny elaeagnus, *Elaeagnus pungens* (affectionately referred to by the Gardens staff as ugly-agnus); and leatherleaf mahonia, *Mahonia bealei*. Despite its gangly nature and invasiveness, the mahonia still garners a bit of affection because of its winter bloom of rich yellow, fragrant flowers. The flowers bloom in clusters from the bottom up at the apex of the branch and are often tended by honeybees out on a midwinter forage.

Honeybees are also in evidence on the highly fragrant blossoms of the winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*. On warm, humid winter days, the fragrance of this twiggy shrub betrays its presence long before the origin of the scent is evident. This native of Japan and China can be found around the Boathouse Education Center and the garage on the Reynolda property. It does not make much of a landscape shrub, but its winter fragrance is an elixir that makes it worthy of an out-of-the-way spot in the landscape.

The honeybees that visit these early blooms are among the few insects active at this time of year. The nests of paper wasps tucked into the corners of the tea-houses in the gardens are empty, the queens having found a safe spot in an old log or other protected place to spend the winter. The basketball-sized, grey nests of hornets evident high in the bare trees have similarly been abandoned. Mud daubers, the thin-waisted wasps that build long cylindrical tunnels of mud lined one against another in the eaves of buildings, are waiting in their larval stage to pupate and emerge in the spring. But the honeybee remains active and makes occasional winter forays both to collect pollen and to defecate, thus avoiding soiling of the hive. In colder climates, this can be a life-threatening proposition. Bees have little ability to produce body heat, and sustained temperatures below forty-two degrees Fahrenheit will be the death of them, so the bees must

leave and return to the hive during small windows of opportunity when temperatures are amenable. Inside the hive, they huddle together to keep warm, expanding and contracting in one large mass to conserve heat. The outside temperature may be below freezing, but the mass of bees does not dip below the mid-forties on its surface. At the center of the mass is the queen, who always stays at a comfortable temperature, never falling below the mid-seventies. On cold nights, bees on the outside of the mass work their way into the center. In this way, the fluctuating mass maintains a relatively even temperature.

Of all the creatures that inhabit the woods and ponds at Reynolda, dragonflies and damselflies are some of the most fascinating. At rest, the two can be distinguished easily: the damselfly holds its wings upright while the dragonfly lays its wings out flat. A damselfly in flight has a dainty way of bobbing along almost like a butterfly, while the dragonfly is as quick as a bullet, a falcon of the insect world. On the annual foray with Young Naturalists campers in the summer, we are sometimes lucky enough to turn up dragonfly larvae beneath a rock in the stream, but invariably we will see active adults flitting in the sunlight on the pond's edge. Sometimes we see them dipping their abdomens in the water as they lay eggs, or we try to pick out males defending their aerial territories. The jewel-colored damselflies are more accessible, their slow and delicate flight and habit of staying more in the shade of the woods often bringing them directly into our path.



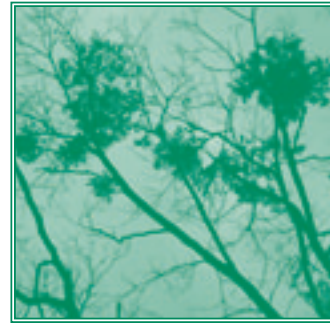
The surface of the pond has returned to calm now. The constant aerial swoop and dive of the insects has gone. Under the surface, the nymphs of both dragonflies and damselflies remain active in winter; active nymphs of the species *Gomphus* have been discovered under four inches of ice. Dragonflies and damselflies are both highly predacious in both the larval and adult form, the adults taking a toll on the local mosquito population. In spring, the splintered skins of dragonflies can sometimes be found on the stems of pond plants. The adult has made its final molt and exchanged its aquatic life for one lived primarily in the air.

Caddisflies may be active in the larvae stage or winter as pupae or eggs, according to species. We always find these little worm-like larvae on our Young Naturalists stream day. These creatures cement cases of sticks or tiny grains of sand and gravel about their bodies with their saliva. Whirligig beetles, those bean-sized, shiny black beetles that spin about on the water surface, are overwintering in the mud beneath the water surface. Waterstriders, the spidery creatures that skate along on the surface tension of the water, are down there, too.

On warm winter days, the turtles that live in the pond will haul themselves out onto fallen trees to bask in the sun. The turtles are rarely subjected to lengthy periods of cold here, but they are biologically prepared to spend months under the water in the mud of the pond's bottom, in the nearly total absence of oxygen. They accomplish this through gas exchange through the skin and the production of compounds that neutralize blood acidity. In experiments, turtles have been found to withstand conditions of almost total lack of oxygen for up to four months.

Much is evident in the tree canopy in winter. Clumps of mistletoe seem on the rise throughout the community. In our neighborhood, it is beginning to gain a foothold in the maples along Reynolda Road. Mistletoe is a hemiparasite; that is, it derives nourishment from a host tree but does not necessarily need it to survive. The plant sends a rootlike protrusion called a haustorium into the bark

of the tree, where it absorbs both water and minerals. Mistletoe is perfectly capable of producing its own food



though, through photosynthesis performed by its leathery leaves. Mistletoe produces white fruits, which contain seeds stuck in a viscous covering. When eaten by hungry birds, the sticky substance adheres to their beaks. They remove it by scraping their beaks against the branches of the trees. This accounts for mistletoe getting around so well. The botanical name of mistletoe is *Phoradendron*, from the Greek, phor meaning a thief and dendron meaning tree, clearly a reference to the plant's parasitic habit. Mistletoe has been highly revered throughout history as a plant of great power and symbolism. The Druids considered the plant a heal-all, aphrodisiac, and protector from evil forces. Neither of the sky or the ground, it was seen as the soul of the revered oak. It was believed to be born of lightning and able to extinguish fire. In Scandinavia, a kiss beneath mistletoe was used to resolve marital discord, the probable origin of our kissing custom.

Black knot is a common ailment in the wild cherries of the Reynolda woods. These knotty growths are formed on branches and twigs of cherry trees and sometimes form large callused growths on the trunks. It is



BLACK KNOT ON  
CHERRY TREE

caused by a fungus with the rather ominous name of *Dibotryon morbosum*; rightfully so for, after a year, it will kill the twigs and move to infest the trunk.

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**WINTER IN REYNOLDA WOODS**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Oak galls may be mistaken for fungus, but in truth they are the work of tiny insects. There are many insects that form galls, but the majority on oaks are formed by wasps. They are in the family Cynipidae and are responsible for over 800 different forms of oak galls. A gall is formed when an insect wounds a plant chemically or through a physical insult. The plant forms a tumorous growth around the wound, which is then occupied by the insect. Gall insects usually complete a life process within the gall, such as an egg to pupation sequence. Other insects may also occupy the gall. If the original occupant is left unharmed, then this insect is referred to as an inquiline; otherwise, it is a parasite. On oak trees high above the Boathouse, oak apple galls are attached to several twigs. Looking like papery brown ping-pong balls, they are the product of a small gnatlike wasp. They are often host to many other residents over the course of a winter. There are at least a hundred different oak apple galls with varying textures and forms and occupying various positions on the tree.

The forest floor is littered with leaves and mostly lifeless brown in January, but there are spots of intense color here and there. Mosses seem brilliant among the dun-colored leaves. Cranefly orchids, *Tipularia discolor* also stand out, their dark green leaves a vibrant purple beneath. Defying what we think of as orchid, this temperate region plant blooms in the summer with a tan, fleshy stem lined with brownish yellow to green insectlike flowers. The flower stalk can reach two feet and have up to forty flowers lining its apex. Despite what sounds like a spectacular flower, it fairly disappears against the summer woodland floor. There are no leaves in evidence at the time of bloom. The cranefly orchid is either in foliage or in bloom, never both at the same time. Ironically, the winter leaves are showier than the flowers. They appear in the autumn and are gone with the first hint of warm weather, warmth that brings so much more to life.

Soon, winter will be gone from the Reynolda woods. Skunk cabbage will bloom in the



CRANEFLY ORCHID

muck along the water's edge. Hepatica and wild ginger will blossom hidden in the leaf duff, and the secrets that winter reveals will cloud over in a haze of emerging foliage. All that summer hides is revealed in winter, and winter secrets are whispered in the spring. 🌱

**GOURDS ENGULF THE GARDEN**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

arrangements, crafts, or garnishing a finely decorated table at Thanksgiving.

With all of this in mind, I knew I wanted to grow something big, something that would make people stop and say, "What's that?" I chose one called 'Dinosaur' from the Seed Savers Exchange catalogue. A Cherokee member from Louisiana gave the seed for this gourd to Seed Savers years ago. The catalogue described it as a "solid green fruit with a long curved neck with wing or vein-like projections over the entire body." The length of each fruit varied from eighteen to twenty-four inches, with an eight inch diameter bowl, making them the perfect candidate for birdhouses, once dried.

With the seed ordered, my attention turned toward designing and building a trellis. Since I had never grown gourds and didn't know what to expect in terms of the growth rate, I knew I needed something substantial. I found an example of what I needed one day while having my morning coffee and flipping through a garden magazine that happened to be in the office. The one portrayed in the magazine was small, basically used in trellising green beans, but, with a



FOLIAGE BEGAN TO BLANKET THE TRELLIS—AND THE GARDEN—IN JULY.

few modifications, I knew I could produce a larger, heavier version that would hold the weight of these gourds.

The basic construction of my trellis was simple. Constructed out of pressure treated lumber, it measures eight feet long and seven feet high. There are two identical sections hinged at the top so that, when it's opened, it becomes a large A-frame. A row of screw-eyes was installed at the top and bottom of each section to accept the heavy-duty mason string that was threaded through each eye, much like a shoe is strung.

As spring rolled around, I placed the trellis in the center of a garden plot that measured approximately twenty-five by forty feet. Everything was going well. The seed had arrived, and the trellis was painted and placed into position. Now all I had to do was plant the seeds and watch them grow. It was about this time that David Bare walked up to the garden to take a look. David had grown gourds in the past and knew what to expect. He looked at me, looked around at the plot for a second, and with the same skepticism as Chief Brody from the movie *Jaws*, who

stated, "We're going to need a bigger boat," said, "You're going to need a bigger plot."

David was right. As the vines grew, they encompassed the entire plot, along with other vegetable plantings; however, all was not lost. The plants produced heavily, and it was a simple matter to cut back the invasive vines that threatened to escape the boundaries of the designated area without disrupting the growth of the already-producing fruits. We had a lot of gourds to give away, and children in the Young Naturalists program this summer will get to take home the rest.

### Growing and Using Gourds at Home

This project was very interesting, and I plan on growing more gourds this year in the same location. For a home project that children can assist with and enjoy, this is one of the easiest. The shape of a gourd can be changed simply by bending the fruit when young, wrapping the young fruit with a rubber band, or constricting its growth by placing it in a jar or another container. As it grows, it will take the shape of the container, which can be broken and removed (with adult supervision, of course). Keep in mind that gourds need full sun and good, fertile, well-drained soil. Since the vines grow vigorously, a side dressing of 10-10-10 every three weeks is needed until midsummer. Discontinuing fertilization at this point allows the fruits to mature.

Treatment of pests and diseases of these warm season plants is much the same as cucumbers, squash, and melons, although most pesticide and fungicide labels fail to mention gourds. The most common pests I dealt with last year were cucumber beetles. A simple dusting of Sevin seemed to take care of that situation.

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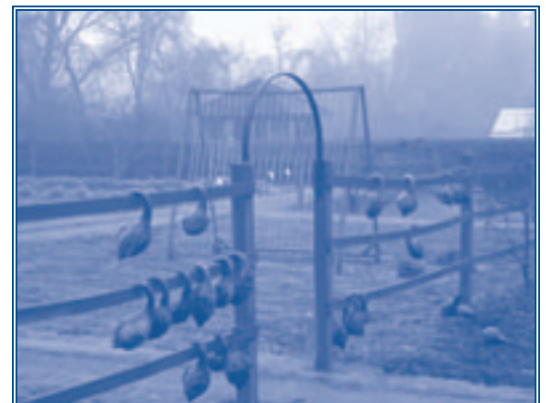
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GOURDS DRYING ON THE FENCE IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

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## The Search for a Single Plant Leads to a Treasury of Flowers

by **Camilla Wilcox**, *curator of education*

One day last fall, head horticulturist Diane Wise asked off-handedly, “What do you suggest we use as a substitute for the monkshood in the Blue and Yellow Garden?” Despite application of multiple treatments, two entire monkshood, *Aconitum* colonies had succumbed to a soil-borne disease that is known to be nearly impossible to eradicate. Diane knew it would be fruitless to try again. She was especially concerned because their absence would leave large, empty spaces in two locations, the Blue and Yellow Garden and the border of the central lawn. My quest for an answer to this short question led me on an odyssey of discovery of a nearly forgotten garden and opened new possibilities to increase the range of plant choices for the restored garden.

The Greenhouse Gardens, designed by Thomas W. Sears in 1917 and restored in 1997, are presented as a re-creation of the appearance of the original design. Since we are fortunate enough to have the original planting plans, we have a good knowledge of the plants that made up the garden and how they were arranged, and we are able to match plants and placement fairly well. Even

if we can't find a particular plant on the Sears plan, such as Dreer's Yellow Favorite dahlia for example, we may determine through research what it looked like and then find a dahlia that closely resembles it. If we have not had enough information on a plant to determine how it looked, we examine the location of the original plant on the plan and in photographs in order to learn more about its form, then make a

judgment based on that evidence. Thus, we are able to keep the “feel” of the garden intact.

In the past, when we've had a problem like that with the *Aconitum* and needed a substitute, we've made changes in the original design by increasing the numbers of plants that have performed well or by choosing from plant lists for other sites on the estate. None of the options we've used before offered a reasonable solution to this problem—either the color, form, size, or bloom time was not right. I turned to a different plan, hoping for more options.

Plan D, which contained flower gardens and borders, was not re-created during the restoration, so I had not examined it in detail. The original plan, which was not available at the time, was altered in the early 1930s, when Mr. Sears returned to Reynolda at the request of estate trustees to make a plan to reduce maintenance in the gardens. He wrote on the template for Plan D that the borders were to be replanted with pachysandra and the garden panels removed from the lawn; this was the directive we used for replanting. We did not learn until much later, when the complete plan was recovered, how intense the maintenance on the original garden must have been. Its scope was massive. A border of flowers and flowering shrubs ringed the inside and outside borders of the lawns surrounding the entire garden and lined the front of the greenhouse. There were twelve large flowerbeds in the center of the east lawn. Bloom began in midwinter and lasted until last frost. There were over a hundred varieties of annual plants and another forty varieties of perennials and shrubs, most of which were not used elsewhere in the garden. They were planted in such abundance that the total number of plants surpassed 10,000. Photographs confirm that the plan was implemented and that the borders and gardens grew to maturity.

With such an abundance of plants from which to choose, including several that have blue flowers in the late summer and fall, the solution to the immediate problem was at hand. A field of six candidates could easily be narrowed to one. It occurred to me, however, that we might be able to add variety to the garden by substituting more than one species for the lost *Aconitum* because the two



A PHOTOGRAPH ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS W. SEARS, MID-1920S, SHOWS PLAN D FULLY IMPLEMENTED.

areas in which they were used were so different. Many of the plants in the Blue and Yellow Garden are southeastern natives. Because most of them have sprawling growth habits, the garden has a wild look at times. For this location, we could look at plants that have an open growth habit and a tendency to mingle freely with their neighbors. By contrast, plants in the central lawn look more controlled and formal. We could look for a more compact, yet upright plant. With Plan D, I had found what I was looking for and much more.

Plan D presented a treasury of plants for various purposes. We are in constant need of replacements as we continue to fine-tune the garden. In the Pink and White Garden, for example, many of Mr. Sears' choices are simply unsuited to the conditions we can offer them. Also, the perennial larkspur and snow-in-summer in the border of the central lawn have been plagued by multiple problems over the years and will have to be replaced eventually. I began thinking about this as I became intrigued by Mr. Sears' choices—the charming clarkia, chimney bellflower, and mignonette flowers; the chrysanthemum, dahlia, and iris selections; the combination of fritillaria, aster, and hosta in the boxwood-enclosed passageways between the tea-houses. I spent the next week poring over the plan and reading reference books. As they had in 1997, old friends *The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, 1935; *Hortus Second, A Concise Dictionary of Gardening and General Horticulture*, 1949; *The New Royal Horticulture Society Dictionary of Gardening*, 1993; and new/old friends acquired in the years between—*RHS Plantfinder 2001-2002*; *Dreer Garden Book*, 1909; *Our Garden Flowers*, 1910; and *Popular Garden Flowers*, 1911, helped me untangle the paths of name changes and synonyms through the past eighty-plus years, so that I could locate the plants we need in current seed and nursery catalogs. Perennial Pleasures Nursery of Vermont, Seed Savers Exchange, Johnny's Selected Seeds, White Flower Farm, Carroll Gardens, and Park's Seed Company are among our sources for seeds and plants.

The variety and abundance that characterized the original flower gardens of Reynolda are illustrated in this abbreviated version of the original list:

- 🌱 Crape myrtle, lilac, Persian lilac, and mock orange shrubs formed the backbone of the borders. (There is no mention of the Japanese weeping cherry trees on this plan, although we know that they arrived in the spring of 1918. They are clearly visible in the accompanying photograph.)
- 🌱 Glory-of-the-snow emerged in late winter, followed by grape hyacinth. Bachelor button, snapdragon, stocks, sweet William, peony, and foxglove gave color and fragrance in the spring.
- 🌱 Annual larkspur, annual blanket flower, petunia, annual coreopsis, and several species of poppy perked up the late spring and summer garden.
- 🌱 Canna, gladiolus, and daylily provided drama, brilliant color, and structure through warm weather.
- 🌱 Dahlia, several species of perennial aster, and China aster closed out the year in the fall.

Some of these, and others not listed here, have been gardeners' favorites for years, but others have been all but forgotten by modern gardeners, including us. We plan to test some of them in a plot near the All-America Rose Selections Garden this year, so we can relearn how to grow them. Come by often and see what you think.

And now back to the solution to the problem presented to me: the monkshood substitute. Two plants emerged as our best candidates, fitting all the criteria set out for them, including availability. When I determined what they were, I wrote a note for Diane. It read, "To make a long story short, I recommend the late fall aster, *Aster tataricus*, either the species or 'Jin Dai' and blue spirea, *Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Longwood Blue' as replacements for the monkshood." I taped it to a new research notebook on Plan D, along with a "shopping list" and sources for thirty-eight plants of all colors, forms, seasons of bloom, and sizes, all ready to fill the next blank space. 🌱

## GOURDS ENGULF THE GARDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

When the growing season nears completion, harvest your gourds just before frost or when the stems turn brown. The curing or drying of gourds is a two-step process. Depending on the size of your gourds, it may take up to six months to dry them completely. The first step, known as surface drying, begins when fruits are harvested. Place them in a well-ventilated, dark area for the first week. In the second step, internal drying, gourds are placed in a warm, dark, well-ventilated area. Any gourd that shows signs of cracking or rotting at this time should be discarded. The internal drying is the most time consuming and may require up to four weeks or longer. Once the drying process is complete, gourds become extremely light, and seeds can be heard rattling inside. They are now ready to be painted or made into birdhouses. The only limit is your imagination. If you visited the Dixie Classic Fair last year, you might have seen the outstanding display of gourd art. Many were painted bright colors, made into birdhouses, or affixed to one another to create an interesting face or animal. It was the first time I had paid close attention to this exhibit, and I owe my newfound appreciation to the experience of growing my own. Maybe I'll enter the contest next year. 🌱



## Purple Muhly Grass and Sweetgrass Baskets

by Preston Stockon,  
manager



It seems like every time I have done a program in the past few years, a hand always goes up at the end with the comment that everything I recommended was “so big!” Big? Well, I do like big and bold plants. When you live and garden on 6.5 acres at home and have large beds like the ones we plant here at Reynolda, it is easy to forget that most people do not have the luxury of space in their home gardens. The Gardens staff does not think that I can “do” small, but I assure you, I can.

I have had a love of ornamental grasses for many years. I love their texture and the way they move in the landscape and rustle in the wind; the different shades of greens, blues, yellows, and reds of their foliage in the summer and fall; and the straw-colored foliage in the winter. I love to watch the birds peck away all winter picking up seed, and I love to burn off the dead leaves in the late winter. This is, of course, not allowed in the city limits or recommended in the country when your neighbors are at home! Okay, I will admit that the majority of the ones I grow at home are large—some grow to fifteen feet tall—but there are several small varieties that I tuck in here and there in the garden that are wonderful plants and perfect for smaller areas. One in particular is a wonderful addition to any sunny garden and has a special history.

I don't know if most gardeners are like me, but I find that I have a couple of plants that are my favorites for a year or two, and then I have a new favorite, then another new favorite, but I have had a love affair with the purple muhly grass, *Muhlenbergia filipes* since I was a child. My family has a house on Edisto Island, which is near Charleston, S.C. When we would visit in the fall, I would notice a beautiful grass with purple flowers blooming everywhere. It grew on vacant lots and along roadsides and looked like a beautiful purple haze. (Maybe that is what Jimi Hendrix had in mind!) Before we left to come home, I would always pick some to put in a vase in my bedroom.

Purple muhly makes a thirty-inch mound of slender, green blades. It is an attractive grass all season but really is at its best in October, when it blooms. The very fine textured, purplish pink flowers and seeds are on spikes that are about one foot above the foliage. After the first freeze, the plant turns a lovely straw color. It is very beautiful with the early morning dew on the seeds. One of its best attributes is that it is so easy to grow. This plant is native to the east and gulf coasts and is very drought tolerant once established. It is not too picky about soil

conditions but must have good drainage. It definitely grows best in full sun. This is one of those plants that looks great mixed in with other plants but looks even better in masses.

For some time, there has been considerable debate about whether the purple muhly that grows in Lowcountry South Carolina was a variety of another muhly grass, *M. capillaris* or a distinct species. *M. filipes* was first identified and described botanically by Moses Ashley Curtis in 1843. Some sources say that *M. capillaris* is taller than *M. filipes* and a little hardier. I have bought several plants under both names and honestly can tell no difference between them. I don't think you can go wrong buying the plant under either name. We have it growing in the perennial beds at Reynolda, and it is beautiful with the late-blooming salvias, asters, and helianthus.

Purple muhly is not only a beautiful grass in the landscape but is also the grass that is used by the Gullah community around the Charleston area to make sweetgrass baskets. These baskets have been made in this area for almost three centuries. Documented as early as 1730, this distinct form of basketry was first practiced almost exclusively by men. The early history of the Lowcountry basket parallels the rise of rice culture. Folk history recounts that slaves wove African coiled baskets to fan rice in order to separate the grains from the chaff. Women took over the craft in the 1920s, when many of the men left the area to serve in the military or look for jobs. Though new forms have evolved in the work of individual artists, the basic designs have remained the same throughout time. The coiled baskets, now highly prized as works of art, represent a major source of income for the community.

Anyone who has visited Charleston has seen the basketweavers on the sidewalks or the basket stands along Highway 17 in Mt. Pleasant. It is fascinating to talk to the women who make these incredibly beautiful and creative baskets. Today these baskets are constructed from four primary plant materials: blades or “threads” of purple muhly; strips of the leaves of palmetto, *Sabal palmetto*; needles of the longleaf pine, *Pinus palustris*; and cuttings of black rush, *Juncus roemarianus*. Although three of the four plants used in the baskets are widely available through collection in the wild, sweetgrass is needed in the greatest quantity and today can be hard to find. Unfortunately, sprawling development has sharply limited access to native sweetgrass. The coastal savannah habitat has disappeared from much of the Lowcountry, and, in some areas where sweetgrass still grows, it cannot be accessed because of private property restrictions, often in gated communities. It is hard to believe that a plant that used to grow like a weed in the area and was harvested by the basketmakers by the armfuls now has to be bought from collectors in Georgia and Florida. Unfortunately, there is a real possibility that this culturally and economically significant art form may disappear if basketmakers cannot find a reliable and affordable source of materials. Recognizing the problems facing the basketmakers, several steps have been taken to help in preserving their traditions. In

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE



## New Plants for an Old Garden: Blue Spirea

by **Diane Wise**, head horticulturist

As you've read in Camilla's accompanying article, we'll be making some changes in Reynolda Gardens during the coming months. The monkshood, *Aconitum*, which was used extensively in Thomas Sears' 1917 landscape plan, is just not working for us. In the last five years, there have been a few other times when a particular plant that was designated by Mr. Sears has been replaced by another that is also on his landscape plan and is similar in form, color, height, bloom time, and "feel." In some cases, the substitution was made because the landscape has matured, and the original, sun-loving plants were completely shaded by large trees. In others, the plan placed plants with different water requirements side-by-side. This was not a problem in 1917, when there were lots of gardeners who could hand water according to each plant's needs, but it's a big problem now, when the staff is small and must rely on irrigation. And, too, some of the plants selected by Mr. Sears were simply inappropriate for our area. As a landscape architect who lived in Philadelphia and worked in the Northeast, he probably had limited knowledge of our Southern climate and exactly how hot and humid our summers can be.

Since the restoration, we've tried to apply the Three Year Rule; i.e., all plant materials have three years to "sink or swim." When those three years are up, if in spite of everything we've done to help them swim, such as mixing in Permatil to improve drainage, applying lime or ash to amend pH, sterilizing the soil, and using fungicide drenches, they still aren't swimming, then it's over. They've sunk, and a substitution is made. When I first came to work at Reynolda, I didn't like the idea of substitutions. I'd fight like the Dickens to keep trying with a certain plant, thinking that maybe next year would

be different; however, after many years of gardening here, I've changed my mind. I'd much rather use an appropriate plant that will look good than the designated plant that always looks terrible. We've decided to replace the aconitum on the main allée and in the Blue and Yellow Garden with *Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Longwood Blue' and *Aster tataricus* 'Jin Dai', both great plants that are a welcome addition to any garden. I'll discuss *Caryopteris* first and talk about *Aster tataricus* in another issue.

The name *Caryopteris*, pronounced kar-ee-op'-ter-is, comes from the Greek, karyon meaning nut and pteron meaning winged, a reference to the plant's winged fruit. Commonly called blue spirea or bluebeard, *Caryopteris* is a member of the Verbenaceae family, which also contains beautyberry, *Callicarpa*; glorybower, *Clerodendrum*; vervain, *Verbena*; and chaste tree, *Vitex*. Native to Eastern Asia, the *Caryopteris* genus contains six species of deciduous herbs or shrubs. They are well suited for the shrub or mixed border and vary widely in form, from tall and erect to low and rambling. The foliage may be glabrous (smooth, with a surface devoid of down or hair) or pubescent (fuzzy with down or hair). In general, the leaves are simple, opposite, aromatic, ovate or linear, and silver in color. The flowers are valued for their late summer and fall bloom and are borne in the axils (the angle formed between the upper surface of the leaf and the stem of the branch to which the leaf is attached). Usually in shades of blue, ranging from pale sky-blue to dark lavender, the blooms are very attractive to bees and butterflies.

*Caryopteris* grows in well-drained, moderately fertile soil, in full sun. It will even do well in sandy, chalk, or limestone soil and in red clay, if it is amended appropriately. Please note that wet feet are the death of a blue spirea. They'll do fine with normal rainfall but should be watered deeply in periods of extensive drought. *Caryopteris* blooms on new wood and should be cut back hard in the spring. Not only will this pruning promote vigorous new shoots, but it will also

### Blue Mist

Pale sky-blue flowers in August and September on four-foot plant. Palest blue of the *Caryopteris*.

### Dark Knight

Deep blue flowers from August to frost on a two- to three-foot plant. Foliage is very silvery. Can tolerate dry locations.

### First Choice

Large, cobalt blue flowers from inky-blue buds in July and August. Blooms earlier than most blue spirea. Dense, dark green foliage on a three-foot, rounded plant.

### \*Longwood Blue

Medium blue flowers from August to September on a three- to four-foot plant. Originated at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

### Snow Fairy

Medium blue flowers from August through September on an upright, three-foot plant. White and green variegated foliage. Does well in partial shade. New and probably a little more difficult to find.

### Worcester Gold

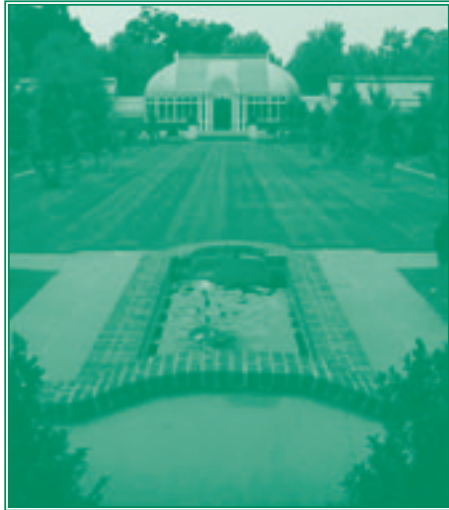
Intense blue flowers in August through September on a two- to three-foot plant. Slightly lower growing than most blue spirea. Bright yellow foliage throughout the summer, fading to green in the fall. A new English introduction. Personally, I think this plant looks chlorotic (like it needs iron), but others like it.

*\*used at Reynolda*

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

## A Little of Reynolda for Your Home: Water Gardens

by Michelle Hawks,  
horticulturist



THE WATER GARDEN, 2004

The sight and sound of water have always drawn people—the reflection of the sun, dragonflies and butterflies dancing overhead, the tranquility of trickling water. The desire for just such a setting has made the water garden an increasingly popular stopping spot at Reynolda Gardens. Last summer was my first working with the water garden. Before I began, I knew very little about how to choose plants and maintain a water garden, but over the summer, I learned how to do both. You can, too.

Water adds an appealing element to any garden. Water gardens can include fountains, waterfalls, small ponds, and combinations of rockwork and lighting. Basically, a water garden is just a pool of water that is home to plants and possibly fish and other water creatures. These are some factors to consider when planning a water garden at home.

### Location

When choosing the location of a pond, consider placing it so that it can be viewed and appreciated through a window from the house or as a focal point in the landscape.

### Exposure to Sunlight

Most water plants need a spot with full sun, at least five hours a day, but preferably as much as eight hours a day. A shadier spot is fine, especially afternoon shade, but the choice of aquatic plants will be limited.

### Drainage

Even though you will use some type of liner, either preformed or flexible, soil in the site should be well drained. Avoid runoff areas of the landscape. Wet soil can distort the shape of an artificial pond and crack or break the liner. A pond placed in sandy or crumbly soil has to be prepared to keep the sides or bottom from continuous shifting or settling.

### Proximity to Trees

If the pond is directly under trees, leaves falling in the pond can decay, harming fish and plant life and clogging pumps and filters. Tree roots can be damaged by the weight of the water.

### Accessibility to Electricity and Water

The pool will most likely be filled with tap water from a garden hose. It will occasionally need an adjustment in the water level due to evaporation, so an accessible water source is mandatory. An electric, submersible pump is generally used to recirculate water for fountains and waterfalls. It needs a normal household circuit plug and should be, at the most, six feet from the water garden.

### Size

In most cases, budget dictates the size of the water garden; however, it is recommended that the water garden be at least eighteen to twenty-four inches deep, preferably deeper in colder climates.

### Choosing Plants

Plants soften the edges of the pond like lace on a dress, with the added benefit of helping the pond reach and keep its ecological balance. There are three main groups of plants. Each has its place in the pond.

#### Floaters

Water hyacinths, *Eichhornia crassipes*; water lettuce, *Pistia stratiotes*; and parrot's feather, *Myriophyllum aquaticum* give shade to the pond. I used all of these and was very happy with them. With their trailing roots, they are wonderful natural cleaners for the pond. These can be invasive as they multiply. By summer's end, you'll be pulling out plants and giving them away. All summer, people asked, "What's that plant that looks like a mosaic?" Well, it is mosaic plant, *Ludwigia sidioides*. Each circular rosette of red and green leaves is only a few inches across, but together they create a striking effect in masses two feet in diameter, like an expensive tiled floor. Mosaic plant does bloom often, with yellow, four-petaled flowers. Unfortunately, this is not a winter-hardy plant, but it's a must-have plant for any water garden.



Waterlilies, *Nymphaea* sp. are another leaf-floater. My favorite one was 'Mayla'. It is shocking pink; no other lily has such a vibrant color. 'Mayla' has large, double flowers that are four to eight inches around. Give 'Mayla' plenty of room. If you like yellow, 'Texas Dawn', which we also used last summer, is the waterlily for you. Large, yellow blossoms are held above slightly mottled leaves all summer. This is one of the most sought-after lilies, another must-have.

Most waterlilies like deeper parts of the pond. You can place them two to three feet below the surface of the water. The leaves will not reach the surface when you lower them in, but they do grow up and will grow larger than if you place them in shallower water. Lilies like fertilizer. I suggest that you fertilize these jewels about one to two times a month, depending on the size of the lily, using two to four pond tablets. Push the tablets down into the soil as far as your finger will allow. Most water lilies need more than four hours of sunlight a day to bloom. Varieties that bloom at dusk are best for shady ponds.

Bowl lotus, *Nelumbo* sp. grows well in shallow water or wet ground locations. The leaves are four to six inches or more in diameter. As summer approaches, the new leaves begin to stand above the water four to six inches high. In July and August, small flowers three to five inches wide open for a midsummer display. Fertilize once the first six leaves have formed, then once a month. There was only one lotus in the garden. Named 'Red Scarf', it was a medium-sized, dark pink with a narrow, painted petal, very unique.



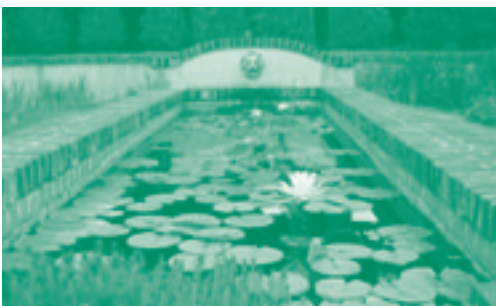
LOTUS SEED PODS ARE AS INTERESTING AS THE FLOWERS.

### Submersibles

Submersibles, also called aerators, are usually tied up in bundles and weighted down completely under water. Anacharis, also known as Brazilian waterweed or freshwater seaweed, *Egeria densa* is a fairly coarse textured underwater plant and is the most durable. This plant is the best choice for fish resistance and is a great natural cleaner. Another example of a submerged oxygenating plant is hornwort, *Ceratophyllum demersum*. It is sometimes referred to as coontail because each segment is shaped like the tail of a raccoon.

### Bog Plants or Marginals

These often require only moist soil. Some like to be covered with about an inch of water. Most bog plants are hardy. The



LOW-GROWING PLANTS COVER THE SURFACE OF THE WATER AND PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR FISH.

flowering varieties need some sun to bloom, but even if your space is in a dappled shade, you may see some blooming. Lizard's tail,

*Saururus cernuus* has a white bloom that resembles a lizard tail. This is one that does well in shade. The curious, yellow, club-like flowers of the golden club, *Orontium aquaticum* appear in early spring. It likes full sun, with shade late in the day. A more common bog plant is pennywort, *Hydrocotyle umbellata*. Small, round leaves with white variegated lobes highlight this groundcover.

These are the very basics of water plants. It's up to you how many you want and how you want to place them. The following list of things to think about might help you refine your choices.

- 🌿 Water lilies do not like splashing water. Place them in the calmest part of the pond.
- 🌿 You can secure anacharis bundles underwater by placing them under baskets, rocks, or bricks.
- 🌿 A single lily, depending on variety, can spread about three feet in diameter.
- 🌿 You can enjoy lotuses anywhere there is sun by placing planters in the ground and keeping water in them.
- 🌿 Plant enough to cover fifty to seventy-five percent of the surface area of the pond.
- 🌿 The majority of these plants never become problems in our area; however, water hyacinth can be highly invasive. It can crowd out other plants and eliminate wildlife. Be sure to keep this plant away from natural waterways.

Happy water gardening! Remember that you're limited only by your imagination. If you find your imagination running dry, visit Reynolda Gardens, and we will offer suggestions! 🌿



THE WATER GARDEN, MID-1920S. WATERLILIES ARE NOT LISTED ON ORIGINAL PLANS FOR THE WATER FEATURE, BUT THEY APPEAR IN ALL THE EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS.

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## MUHLY GRASS AND SWEETGRASS BASKETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

October 1988, the Town Council of Mt. Pleasant resolved to make preservation of the basket stands in the area a goal of the zoning process. In December 1991, the Sweetgrass Preservation Society was formed by the Mayor of Charleston to help the basketmakers work on strategies to help protect and preserve their craft and tradition. In 2002, the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station and the College of Charleston, with funding from the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium, began studying how to help basketmakers find solutions for the scarcity of the purple muhly. The researchers interviewed twenty-three basketmakers at home or at the roadside stands where they sell their wares, to identify common views about sweetgrass use and management. It is hoped that through setting aside land for farming sweetgrass, home cultivation, and opening lines of communication with owners of private land, basketmakers will once again have a local source and their long tradition of basketmaking will continue. Although we only use this plant for aesthetic reasons here at Reynolda Gardens, it is nice to know that efforts are being made to preserve it in its native region. 🌱

## NEW PLANTS FOR AN OLD GARDEN: BLUE SPIREA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

help restrict the plant's size. *Caryopteris* will tolerate temperatures from zones 6 to 9; much colder and you'll lose them. If they do die down in a particularly cold winter, don't be too quick to remove them from your garden. Often, young shoots will come up from the ground in the spring, even though you're convinced they're gone forever. Species *Caryopteris* can be propagated by seed in the fall or semi-ripe cuttings in the summer. Cultivars are propagated by semi-ripe cuttings, also in the summer. Use a sandy mix and place cuttings on bottom heat.

The *Caryopteris* species I recommend for the home gardener, and the one we will be using at Reynolda, is *C. x clandonensis*, which is slightly more hardy than the others and will tolerate temperatures down to 5° F. A mounded shrub from two to four feet tall and wide, *C. x clandonensis* has linear leaves that are grey-green above and grey-white below. It bears blue flowers of varying shades. A list of cultivars that you may want to try in your garden is on page 9. Please note that the differences between most cultivars are slight. Most of these are relatively easy to find, and a good selection should be available at most of our local nurseries. 🌱

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