



Perennial Notes

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, Inc.

Jan. 2019



The Long and Winding Road to the Rhododendron micranthum

By Conrad J. Wrzesinski

The Long and Winding Road from the title of a Beatle's tune is an apt description of the discovery of *Rhododendron micranthum*. In the early years of the last century, plant explorers from England and the United States made their way to remote areas of China and other parts of Asia to collect plant material. Among these intrepid plant explorers was Ernest Henry "Chinese" Wilson (1876-1930), who was so nicknamed for his many plant collecting expeditions to China. Originally Wilson collected plants for the Veitch Nursery in England. Later he collected plants for the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. In 1901, Wilson introduced *Rhododendron micranthum* from plants he collected dur-

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WHPS coming events!

All regular meetings are at 6:30 pm. social time, 7 pm. program, at Olbrich Gardens Commons, 3330 Atwood Av., Madison unless otherwise noted.

Questions about our events? Email wisconsinhps@gmail.com for specific info.

Saturday, January 19, WHPS Workshop: Recording your Garden (both workshops are full but you can sign up for waiting list), 9-11:00 am., Second Offering 2-4:00 pm.

Sunday, January 20, 9:30 am.-noon Potluck, Annual Meeting, Seed Exchange, Presentation by John Cannon and John Fritsch and Garden Item Exchange. This year we are joining our Annual Meeting and Seed Exchange with our January Potluck. Bring your own utensils and a dish to share: set up time 9:30 am.; food line 10:00 am. Water, juice, coffee and tea will be provided. The Seed Exchange and Garden Item Exchange will be available both before and after the Potluck, and the Annual Meeting will begin at the end of the potluck, and will include a vote on recommended donations and the introduction of and vote for a new director. Following that will be a presentation by John Cannon and John Fritsch of photos of gardens visited during the June 2018 trip to England. **[This will be our first ever used Garden Item Exchange!]** Declutter your garage or gardening shed and share the items you no longer use with other members. Suggested items include, but are not limited to: Tools, garden art, pottery, amendments, plant tags, seeds, books, gloves, etc. **Please Do Not Bring:** Be mindful of Olbrich, and do not bring dirty or soiled items.

Fertilizers are acceptable if unopened and/or tightly sealed. Please do not bring items that are broken or unrepairable, small engines, or lawnmowers. Shirley Scriver at scrivs@charter.net and Anna DePauw at anna@botannaca.com will be organizing this event.]

Friday-Sunday, February 8-10, WPT Garden Expo. WHPS will once again host a booth and a speaker at the Wisconsin Public Television Garden Expo. Volunteer work slots in our booth was sent out in an email with access to the Sign-up Genius Website and now all spots are full. If you have any questions, contact WHPS Expo Coordinator Shirley Scriver at scrivs@charter.net. The WHPS-sponsored seminar will be held this year on Saturday, February 9, from 1:15-2:15 pm. in Mendota Room 3. Our seminar speaker this year will be Mark Konlock, Director of Horticulture, Green Bay Botanical Garden. He will speak on the topic, *Holistic Landscape Design - Considering Nature When Choosing Plants*. When designing our home landscapes, we can and should consider the larger ecosystem in our neighborhoods and communities. Animals and plants in an ecosystem have evolved to be dependent on each other. By choosing native plant varieties we are also choosing plants that will support the most wildlife.

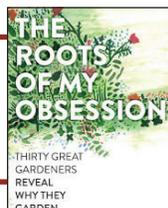


Saturday, February 16, from 1-4:00 pm. WHPS Pruner Workshop: Pruner Clean-up and Sharpening. Bring your bypass pruners in need of

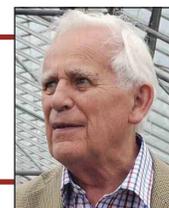
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Is this a weed?
see p. 4.



Gardening books
see p. 5.



David Austin
see p. 5.

WHPS Coming Events (continued from p.1)

maintenance and learn how to care for them in this informal workshop. WHPS member Betsy True will show how to disassemble, clean, sharpen, and oil your bypass pruners. NOTE: she will discuss general sharpening and upkeep, but the specific brands demonstrated will be ARS, A.M. Leonard and Felco. Bring your bypass pruners and any maintenance supplies you have. Supplies will also be provided at the workshop. If you have been unable to attend in the past, sign up now! <http://www.wisconsinhardyplant-society.org/event-calendar.html>

Wednesday, February 20, 40 Years of Gardening: A Madison Gardener's Reminiscences, with speaker Frank Greer. Frank will discuss his favorite plants, people, places and recommendations for gardening success. More importantly, he will discuss thoughts

for preparing for garden enjoyment later in life by simplifying a gardener's world. Frank has been with WHPS since its inception, serving as President from 1996-2016 and now serving as Immediate Past President. He has organized and arranged the WHPS biennial trip to England for over 20 years and currently is Chair of the WHPS Program Committee. Frank is known for his Nakoma shade garden, his love of epimediums and the beautiful containers of annuals that share his driveway each year.



Wednesday, March 20, Prairie Plants for the Urban Garden, with speaker Neil Diboll, Consulting Ecologist and President of Prairie Nursery. A pioneer in the native



plant industry and recognized internationally as an expert in native plant community ecology, Neil Diboll has guided the growth of Prairie Nursery for 30 years. He has dedicated his life to the propagation of native plants and their promotion as uniquely beautiful, ecologically beneficial and sustainable solutions for landscapes and gardens. In 2013, Neil was the recipient of the Great American Gardeners Award from the American Horticultural Society. Neil's love of native plants and their habitat is contagious, and we look forward to his thoughts on the use of prairie plants in our urban gardens.

Wednesday, April 17, Abelia to Ziziphora: 30 Years of Plant Evaluation at Chicago Botanic Garden, with speaker Richard Hawke. The Chicago Botanic Garden has been evaluating



and recommending superior garden plants to home gardeners and the green industry since 1988. Richard Hawke will give an overview of the evaluation program and present a variety of proven plants from 30 years of trials, including new selections and old favorites. Richard Hawke is responsible for the comparative evaluation of over 1,000 perennials and woody plants each year.

He is the principal author of *Plant Evaluation Notes*, an author and contributing editor for *Fine Gardening*, and writes for other horticulture publications such as *Perennial Plants*, *The American Gardener*, and *Nursery Management*.

Other programs/events. The Workshop Committee is currently working to confirm workshops for 2019. We thank the members who attended these free events in 2018 and encourage those who have thoughts/ideas for future Workshops to contact Workshop Committee Chair Emily Buckingham at emilybuckingham@gmail.com. See back page for a special workshop request.

Thursday, June 27, WHPS Evening Garden Tour: Sun Prairie (Lynne and Tom Bendt, Cindy and Mike Cunningham, Lynn and Greg Belanger) – details TBA.

Tuesday, July 16, WHPS Evening Garden Tour: Middleton (Jean and Ken Nordlund, Linda and Bruce Christensen, Betsy True and Danny Aerts, Mary and Conrad Wrzesinski) – details TBA.

Tuesday, July 23, 6:30 pm., Tour of the grounds of Epic Systems in Verona with Jeff Epping.

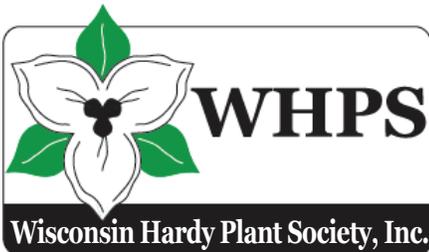
Tuesday, Aug 6, 6:30 pm., Tour of Rotary Botanical Gardens in Janesville with Mark Dwyer.

Sunday, August 18 – Member Potluck and Walk Through Olbrich Gardens

Wednesday, September 18, Preserving Rare Plants and Dealing with Invasive Plants with speaker Kay Havens, Ph.D., Medard and Elizabeth Welch Director, Plant Science and Conservation, Chicago Botanic Garden.

Wednesday, October 16 – Karen Busso lini will speak on the topic of The Unsung Season: Gardens in Winter. She is a garden photographer, speaker, writer, NOFA-Accredited Organic Land Care Professional, and eco-friendly Garden Coach.

Wednesday, November 20, Gardening with Wildlife with speaker David Drake, a professor of Wildlife Damage Management, Extension Wildlife Specialist in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and a researcher with the UW-Madison Urban Canid Project.

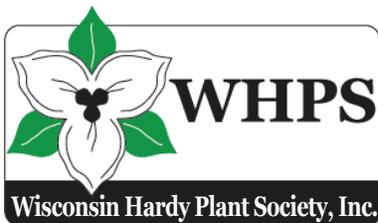


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WHPS Dues for 2019

On December 28, WHPS sent an email to members whose dues are paid only through 2018 and thus owe 2019 dues. (Memberships are from January 1 through December 31.)



We are offering members two options to renew.

- You can renew online with a credit card. There will be a small processing fee for this option. Don't be dismayed by the large dollar amount range in the renewal cost. This amount includes optional donations.
- The other option is to print out the renewal form and mail it in with a check.

Click here for online renewal or printable form: <http://www.wisconsinhardyplantsociety.org/membership.html>

Paper renewal forms will be sent out in late January. If you could renew before then, it would save us the time, paper and postage of sending you a paper form. To remain on our mailing list, renewals are due by March 1, 2019.

If you plan to have family members join you for events/trips, please sign up for a family membership. Remember, trips are for members only.

If you plan not to renew for 2019, we would appreciate your letting us know by emailing us at wisconsinhps@gmail.com. That too will prevent us sending you forms and reminders.

Thanks so much for renewing quickly and for your ongoing support of our organization!

— Jane LaFlash, WHPS Membership Coordinator

WHPS Grants

A reminder to members of our grant program. The WHPS will award up to \$500 to a community group, school, or other organization for a project that promotes the use of herbaceous perennial plants in the landscape. See details and an application form on our website.

<http://www.wisconsinhardyplantsociety.org/grants.html>

Rhododendron (cont. from p.1)



ing an expedition in Hubei province in northern China.

The Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs describes *Rhododendron micranthum* as, "A very distinct and interesting Chinese species which has racemes of tiny white, bell-shaped flowers, which are entirely different from

nearly all other rhododendrons." *R. micranthum* is found in northern China and parts of Manchuria, growing on difficult to access cliffs, dry gorges and along ridges, at elevations of 5,000 to 8,000 feet. You can imagine the challenges Ernest Wilson encountered not only in accessing plants in remote areas of China, but then transporting the plants back to a seaport on the coast of China for shipment to the Veitch Nursery or the Arnold Arboretum.

In appearance *R. micranthum* forms a bushy, well-branched evergreen shrub, as pictured here. After 10 years the shrub will be about five feet in height. An acidic soil with a PH of 4.5 to 6.0 is recommended, as with other rhododendrons. The narrow deep-green leaves, which accent the profuse clusters of white flowers, are less than one inch in length. The clusters of white flowers, pictured in the close up from our garden, appear in midsummer, well after most other rhododendrons have finished blooming.

R. micranthum has graced our garden for over 30 years. During this time *R. micranthum* has consistently flowered, even following brutal winters and late-spring frosts. The white flowers begin to appear at the end of June and continue well into July.

A pink-flowered hybrid, *Rhododendron* 'Bloombox Pink', which is a cross between *R. hirsutum* x *micranthum*, has been registered. Though readily available in Europe, finding sources in the United States for the species *R. micranthum*, or the hybrid, *R.* 'Bloombox Pink' presents another difficult long and winding road.

2019 Other events of note

January 2019 advance order forms for the 2019 Friends of the Arboretum Native Plant Sale (to be held on May 11) are now available through February 14. <https://arboretum.wisc.edu/content/uploads/2018/12/2019-FOA-advance-orders.pdf> Contact Karen Deaton (director@foamadison.org or call 608-571-5362) for more information.

February 2-3, 2019, Orchid Quest, sponsored by Orchid Grower's Guild, Olbrich Botanical Garden <http://www.orchidguild.org/orchid-quest.html>

February 8-10, 2019, Wisconsin Garden Expo, Alliant Energy Center. <https://www.wigardenexpo.com/>

Allen Centennial Garden Spring 2019 Symposium Friday, March 22: Marquee Theater, Union South, 3:30–5:00 pm. Film – *Five Seasons: The Gardens of Piet Oudolf*; Saturday, March 23, 8:30 am.-4:00 pm., Resilient Landscapes Symposium, Mendota Room of the DeJope Residence Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. **SPECIAL NOTE:** As a sponsor, WHPS members will be able to register online early (January 21). More info will be sent in an email to members later this month. <https://uwccs.eventsair.com/QuickEventWebsitePortal/acg19symp/info>

April 11-14, Art in Bloom, Milwaukee Art Museum. Discover stunning art-inspired floral installations set among three floors of the Museum's Collection Galleries. The annual Art in Bloom event has something for everyone, from family activities to the popular fashion show. Venture into a world of art and flowers for a few hours—or all four days! Check Website for information on advance tickets later in January. <https://mam.org/bloom/>

New Members since last newsletter

Karen Anderson, Jill Bedford and James Dunn— welcome!

Label-making

It seems that a universally shared frustration with gardeners is finding a good labeling system at a reasonable cost. Unless you have a teaching or display garden, you may not want your labels to show or, even if you do, you may want a backup system. After years of searching, I have found a couple of methods that work.

There is a pen called DecoColor, a paint marker which is available online and for \$2.50 at the Wisconsin Craft Market in Westgate Mall, and probably other craft stores. They come in an array of colors and tip sizes. I prefer black with an extra fine tip.

When marking a plant I'm sharing with a friend, a quick label is just writing the



name on a white plastic knife. I've been using this method for 15+ years and they still look like new. The problem when using them in the garden is the knife will break when stepped on (wood eventually rots).

I wanted something permanent in my garden, so I use this method. I find used

white metal blinds at resale stores, and cut them into 6-8" strips using metal shears. I use a Brother P-touch Labeler, but any brand will do. A UV indoor/outdoor rated tape is necessary. (I found out the hard way that the indoor variety doesn't hold up.) Affix your label to the strip of blind and insert it into the ground, always placing it in the same position around the plant so that you can easily find it. It may get buried over time, but you can be assured that it will always be there and it will always be legible.

– Rita Thomas

Is this a Weed?

We all look forward to the birth of spring, when our gardens are full of growth and we are able to spend more time outdoors. At times, our excitement to begin gardening can turn to confusion when we realize we're not sure what's growing. "Is this a weed?" is one of the most common questions I get asked. I tend to put weeds into a couple of categories: Nonnative invasives and Invasive natives. The first category I almost always recommend getting rid of, because they are responsible for ruining the biodiversity of our forests and prairies, and limiting plant and animal life.

Here are a couple of species that we see a lot of in Dane County, and they are quite pretty! It can be hard to pull something that you enjoy, but it's important that we keep them under control, so that they don't out-compete our native plants and the plants you're growing in your garden.

Campanula rapunculoides, known as Creeping Bellflower, is highly invasive. The stalks of light purple flowers can be seen all over Madison in midsummer. It can often be confused for *Adenophora lilifolia*, and has been sold in plant nurseries that way. Though also not native, *Adenophora* does not have the same invasive qualities. One of the difficulties about Creeping Bellflower is that it reproduces via rhizomes and seed. Here is what the Wisconsin DNR recommends for control:

- Mechanical: Dig at least 6" deep and several inches out from the plant to en-



sure you have gotten all of the roots. Repeated pulling or mowing in a growing season will weaken the plant but will not kill it.

- Chemical: Apply a glyphosate solution using foliar spray or wicking method.

Hesperis matronalis, known as Dame's Rocket. It is often mistaken for Wild Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) because they bloom at the same time. One way to differentiate them is Dame's Rocket has 4 petals, and toothed margins on the leaves. Wild Phlox has five petaled flowers and smooth leaves. Unfortunately, Dame's Rocket has been included in some wildflower seed mixes. Avoid those mixes!

- Mechanical: Pull plants in early spring; plants in bloom should be bagged and disposed of in a landfill. Burn infested areas in seedling or rosette stage.



- Chemical: Foliar spray with glyphosate or triclopyr on large infestations in late fall when native plants are dormant but the basal rosettes of Dame's Rocket are still green.

As with all weeds, the most important quality is diligence! After a spring clean-up, the best way to keep weeds down is to walk through and enjoy your garden daily (or at least weekly!) and pull up what does not belong. Happy Gardening!

– By Anna DePauw, Horticulturalist and owner of Botannaca Garden Design & Care

Anna is a horticulturalist and artist, inspired by nature. After working in the Landscape Design and Garden Center sector for 17 years, she decided to branch out on her own. She offers a variety of detailed gardening services and would love to discuss your next project. www.botannaca.com Anna is a business member of WHPS and Board member.

BOOK REVIEW:

The Roots of My Obsession: Thirty Great Gardeners Reveal Why They Garden

Thomas C. Cooper (Editor)

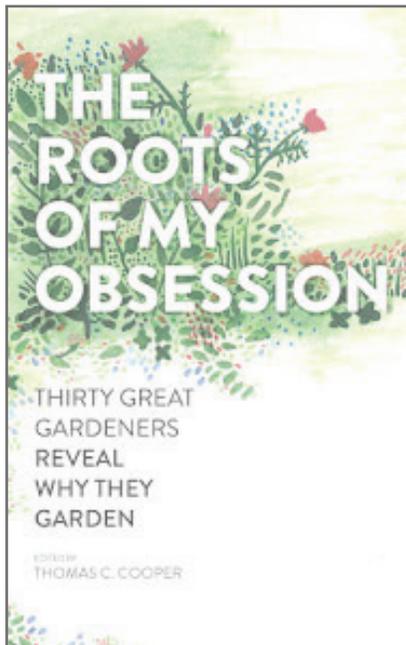
The *Roots of My Obsession* is a delightful collection of 30 short essays by prominent gardeners and garden writers answering the question, “why do you garden?” Though the paths these gardeners have taken are varied, they all share a deep connection to the natural world and an innate desire to achieve personal expression through their gardens. I think that every avid gardener will find some kindred souls within these stories.

Some of the authors were born gardeners, crawling into the garden before they could walk; some were nurtured by parents, grandparents, or mentors; and some followed a more circuitous path before developing a passion for gardening. I smiled while reading Tony Avent’s account of the business he started at age six – selling terrariums he’d created with collected woodland specimens. The proceeds were, of course, used to mail order more plants. It seemed preordained that he would one day start Plant Delights Nursery.

The reasons for gardening are as varied as the gardeners. Some seek to create beauty – for themselves and others; some seek to create a tranquil, personal sanctuary and a respite from the pressures of the modern world; and some seek to make their land productive, by growing food or creating natural habitat. Douglas Tallamy, a professor of wildlife ecology, gardens not because he loves plants, but because he loves animals. He is sustained by observing and fostering the web of life, right in his own backyard.

David Austin Dead at 92

The New York Times has reported that David Austin, noted rose hybridist and owner of David Austin Roses, passed away December 18 at the age of 92. Known for their fragrance, beauty and hardiness, ‘The Fairy’, ‘Therese Bugnet’, ‘Iceberg’, ‘Gertrude Jekyll’ and ‘Graham Thomas’ are just a few of the world-renowned, award-winning roses among the 230 varieties developed by Austin and his family over the last sixty years. Those of us who love roses and grow even one of these varieties are grateful for the vision and hard work that Austin contributed to the development of these beautiful roses.



Many of the gardeners share stories of triumph over adversity, including decimation from marauding deer, new and even more invasive species or the disastrous effects of climate change. Ken Druse has experienced multiple hurricanes and the aftermath of epic floods in his New Jersey garden. Still, he is unwilling to give up on his beautiful land and the thrill of watching things grow. He observes that the only way to cure the addiction to gardening is to garden more.

Another common theme expressed by many of these gardeners is the unique ability of the garden to transcend time. Thomas Christopher beautifully expresses this sentiment:

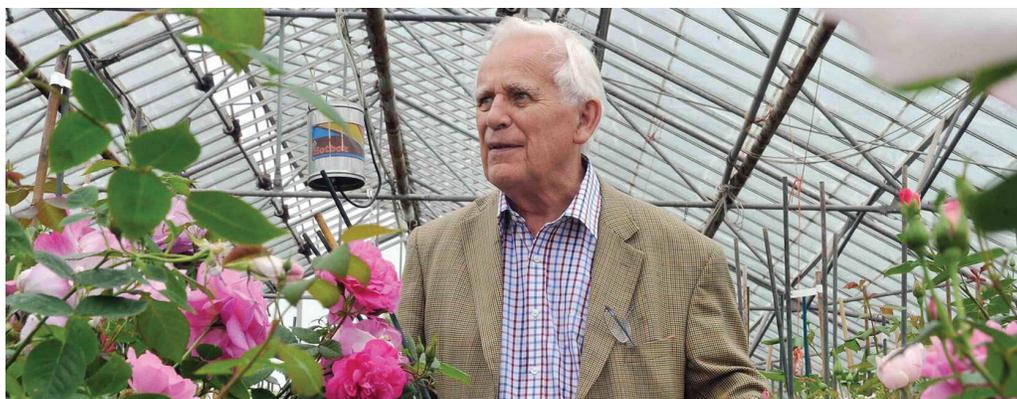
“This is for me the greatest power and attraction of gardening, the transcendence it yields at unexpected moments. Occasionally, when I excise a dandelion from the lawn with one of the patented weed-pullers I inherited from my mother, I hear her telling me how the task should be done. When I plant a tree, I may see my father, still young, punching holes in the hard earth of a pasture with a digging bar...

ging bar...

A physicist has told me that time is a dimension that extends as readily backward as forward, and that our inability to see what we think of as the past is just a peculiarity of our limited powers of perception.

It’s only in the garden that I have ever felt myself escaping this perceptual constraint. Sometimes the experience takes the form of an instant so beautiful and rich as to move me, for a moment, outside of time. In others, usually while planting, the sensation is of jumping forward to glimpse the seedling grown large, the landscape as it will be. What I continue to prize most, though are the reconnections with people, places and times otherwise lost to me.”

– Reviewed by Linda Grosz





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Have questions about your membership? Contact Jane LaFlash at wisconsinhps@gmail.com or (608) 243-1208.

Workshop assistance needed

The Workshop Committee is in the process of confirming dates and topics for 2019 Workshops. You'll note a couple of Workshops have already been posted in the WHPS Calendar of this newsletter, and we will also be posting new workshops as they are confirmed on our website at www.wisconsinhardyplantsociety.org, and including them in emails, if the timing permits.

We also have received the following request from Workshop Committee member Jayne Squirrel:

"Pollinators, including native bees, are important to the ecosystem of our gardens and of our planet. Adding bee hotels to our gardens can provide habitat and protection for these valuable insects. I would like to organize a WHPS workshop for building bee hotels. Although I have a background in honey bee ecology, I am less familiar with that of solitary native bees (though I am learning). If you have experience building bee hotels and are willing to either a) lead a workshop on building bee hotels (I'm happy to help with materials and organization) or b) share your knowledge with me so that I can lead a workshop, please email me at jaynem.squirrel@gmail.com. Thank you!"



2019 WHPS Bus Trips



Wednesday, May 22 – Princeton, Rockford, Janesville including: Hornbaker Gardens, Anderson Japanese Garden, K&W Greenery

Wednesday, June 5 – Greenfield, Burlington, Janesville including: private gardens of Will Radler (Knock Out rose hybridizer) and Penny Torhorst, Northwind Perennial Farm, Rotary Botanic Garden

Wednesday, July 17 – Glencoe, IL including: Chicago Botanic Garden, private gardens of Janice Becker and Nicole Williams/Larry Becker

Wednesday-Sunday, July 31-Aug 4 – Michigan including: Fernwood Botanical Garden, Hidden Lake Garden, MSU Horticulture Garden, Frederik Meijer Garden, Gabis Arboretum, River Street Flowerland, Gee Farms, Stonehouse Nursery, Spring Meadow Nursery, Mast Young Plants, Great Garden Plants, Walters Gardens, private gardens

This itinerary is subject to change. The trips brochure and registration forms will come out sometime in March.