

**NEW PLANT FORUM**

Compiled and Moderated by Jack Alexander

**PRESENTERS:**

- Kathy Freeland** ..... Midwest Groundcovers, St. Charles, IL  
1) *Vinca minor* 'Ralph Shugert'
- Christopher Rogers** ..... Weston Nurseries, Hopkinton, MA.  
1) *Halesia monticola* 'Rosea'  
2) *Halesia tetrapetala* (syn. *H. carolina*) - hybrid
- Dan Studebaker** ..... Studebaker Nursery, New Carlisle, OH  
1) *Betula nigra* 'Tecumseh Compact'  
2) *Taxus × media* 'Amherst'
- Nancy Vermeulen** ..... John Vermeulen and Son, Inc. Neshanic Station, NJ  
1) *Rhododendron* 'Peter Vermeulen'
- Dick Brooks** ..... Kalmia Woods Nursery, Concord, MA  
1) *Rhododendron* 'Aviva Ann'
- Gary Koller** ..... Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA  
1) *Acer heldreichii*  
2) *Securinega suffruticosa*

***Vinca minor* 'Ralph Shugert'**

I volunteered to present this plant with a great deal of pleasure. The person for whom it is named is very special to me and through the years has been a pillar of knowledge and strength to many of us. Having a plant named for oneself is like being given a bit of immortality and I cannot think of a better person to have his name in perpetuity!!!!

A new and distinct cultivar of *Vinca minor* has been patented by Hortech of Spring Lake, Michigan and is being grown by Midwest Groundcovers, St. Charles, IL; Wayside Gardens of South Carolina; and Shadow Nursery of Tennessee.

This plant, *V. minor* 'Ralph Shugert' originated as a sport of *V. minor* 'Bowles Variety' and was first propagated by David Mackenzie using intermittent mist and root inducing substances during 1986. The plant is characterized by foliage which is the same shape and size as 'Bowles Variety'. It has leaves that are colored deep glossy green, edged with a thin margin of white. Flowers are typical of the parent plant. 'Ralph Shugert' is a vigorous grower, has great commercial potential, and good ornamental value

The registration as a woody plant cultivar was applied for and received in 1987.

The plant was named "to commemorate the most enthusiastic and sharing horticulturist that I have had the pleasure of knowing".

***Halesia monticola* 'Rosea'**

This medium sized tree in the north blooms in mid-May with 3/4 to 1 in. light pink bell-shaped flowers. Its light green four winged fruit turns light brown in September and persists into the fall. The original tree is 50 ft tall and pyramidal in outline. Cuttings were obtained from the Arnold Arboretum's Case Estate

***Halesia tetraptera* Hybrid**

This tree is from a group of seedlings originating from Weston Nurseries. The original tree is 20 ft tall and 30 ft wide. Its pure white bell-shaped flowers are slightly larger and showier than the species. It blooms in mid-May. The 1 1/2- to 2-in., light green, four-winged fruit turns light brown in September; it persists through the fall. Both these *Halesia* selections root readily from softwood cuttings taken in June.

***Taxus × media* 'Amherst'**

This taxus is another selection from seed of Hatfield origin done by Laddie Matiska, a student of L.C. Chadwick. He named this plant after the city in Ohio in which his nursery was located. The bright green, stiff needles have a very characteristic curl, curved to show the lighter undersides of this coarser *Taxus × media* type. It is a striking unique-looking, low-spreading shrub while young, becoming hemispherical shaped with age with most branches ascending. It exhibits excellent winter color, hardiness drought tolerance and a good growth rate. Large specimens may be viewed at Sequest Arboretum Living Herbarium of *Taxus* in Wooster, Ohio.

***Betula nigra* 'Tecumseh Compact'<sup>TM</sup>**

This plant was discovered at Stuebaker Nursery about seven years ago as a chance seedling purchased in as *Betula nigra*. The plant was half the size of the species with dense, compact branching much of it extending at 45 degrees to a nearly horizontal plane from the main stem. Progeny taken as stem cuttings produced the same effect; the oldest outplanting is about 5 to 6 ft tall as a 6-year-old plant and about as wide. Unpruned specimens, 5-years old, are wider than tall, about 6 to 7 ft across and 4-ft tall. Some single-stemmed plants are staked and side branches are allowed to create a weeping effect. The cinnamon-exfoliating bark is well displayed for specimen use. The compact clump form can be used for screening in residential and size-restricted landscapes. This plant appears to exhibit more overall prostrate or horizontal branching than *B. nigra* 'Fox Valley'. Growth rate is fairly vigorous as rooted cuttings grow to 2 ft the first year in liner beds. The 'Tecumseh Compact' name has been trademarked by Stuebaker Nurseries, Inc.

***Rhododendron* 'Peter Vermeulen'**

This outstanding rhododendron was selected from a group of plants believed to originate from a cross of *Rhododendron* 'America' with *R.* 'Scintillation'.

Flower color is a bright iridescent pink with shades from dark (Pantone 239u) to light (Pantone 217u). Buds hold the dark shade with florets opening dark and graduating to dark and light. The semi-prominent blotch is golden yellow (Pantone 121u). Florets spread from 2 to 3 in. and form 5 to 7 in. trusses that are firm and symmetrical.

Foliage is dark green (Pantone 350u), broad, flat, slightly rounded at leaf edges, prominently ribbed and blessed with an eye-catching sheen or shine depending on the season.

Plant habit is broad, rounded, and full, with strong, sturdy growth.

It cultures well in micropropagation and responds nicely in subsequent transplanting, growing soon to produce a well budded saleable plants.

### ***Rhododendron* 'Aviva Ann'**

This rhododendron is a hybrid of *R. yakushimanum* and the old Waterer cultivar 'Mars'. It forms a densely-branched rounded plant, 4 1/2 ft high by 7 1/2 feet wide in 17 years. The leaves, which are held by the plant for 4 to 5 years, are 3 1/2 to 5 in. long, stiff and leathery, with a thin, tan-colored indumentum covering the lower surface. The foliage has sustained no damage during 18 New England winters.

In Concord, Massachusetts, 'Aviva Ann' blooms during the last week in May to the first week in June, depending on the season. The inflorescence is composed of 15 to 19 flowers in a truss 6 to 7 in. in diameter; individual flowers are 3 in. in diameter, of heavy substance, and when newly open are an intense clear pink, turning paler as the flower ages, but retaining the deeper pink coloration on the edges and reverse of the flower.

The plant has bloomed freely (no damaged buds) after a low winter temperature of -17°F (-27°C).

### ***Acer heldreichii*—Balkan maple**

Maples are a strong component of the landscape because of their proven adaptability, dependability, availability, cost effectiveness and name recognition by the public. The quest goes on to find new selections among a relatively narrow species range which also limits genetic diversity should unforeseen pests and diseases become problematic.

A maple deserving greater consideration by growers is *Acer heldreichii* native to Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece but which remains rare elsewhere. The Arnold Arboretum first acquired this plant in 1902 (AA 12498) from the Spath Nursery Company in Berlin, Germany. A second shipment was received from Spath Nursery in 1912 (AA 12490). This plant remains in good condition with a height of 64 ft, a spread of 38 ft and a DBH of 5 ft 8 in., recorded in 1990. The tallest specimen recorded by S.J. Bean in *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles* is at Hergest Croft, Hereford, 75 ft tall with a circumference of 9 ft recorded in 1985.

Balkan maple is quite similar to *A. pseudoplatanus* but seems to vary in the following ways: According to Alfred Rehder in the *Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs* on *A. pseudoplatanus* the yellowish green flowers are borne in narrow, pendulous panicles while those of *A. heldreichii* are yellow in upright ovoid long-stalked panicles. At maturity *A. heldreichii* becomes a less massive tree making it more appropriate to smaller landscape spaces. At the Arnold Arboretum our mature trees have all grown taller than wide which might prove to be a useful characteristic along urban streets. The bark of the tree is much different in that our specimens do not exhibit the exfoliating bark typical of *A. pseudoplatanus*. Instead the bark on young trees is a medium brown with a faint undercolor of salmon. Young trees have terminal buds which are plump and bright green, reminding me of the terminal buds of *Syringa vulgaris*. Trees grafted in 1985, and now 6 years old, stand approximately 15 feet tall and are full and bushy with multiple branches. On mature trees the bark remains relatively smooth interrupted by low profile plates of the same color and the salmon color highlights are retained.

The foliage on the typical species is similar to *A. pseudoplatanus*. What is different is that in the autumn *A. heldreichii* turns a clear butter yellow, occasionally marked with brown veins before falling away. At the Arnold Arboretum the

variety *Acer heldreichii* var *macropterum* (Syn. *A. heldreichii* subsp. *visianni*) has among the most beautiful foliage of all the large leaved European maples. The leaves are deeply divided into narrow lobes to create a shape reminiscent of the foliage of Virginia creeper. Again, the autumn foliage is bright yellow. The variety *macropterum* also varies by having fewer, but thicker branches which gives the plant a more open character.

All the Arnold's mature trees of Balkan maple have grass growing right up to the trunk indicating that the root system is not so shallow nor the branching so dense as to retard those plants growing at or near the base. A question which needs to be answered is that of the trees resistance to salt spray. Will it be equally tolerant of ocean and maritime environmental conditions as *A. pseudoplatanus*? If it proves to be, this characteristic along with its smaller size and good autumn color would make it a desired plant for the seacoast, along highways and other locations where environmental salts are a problem.

The seeds being distributed today come from Arnold Arboretum number 12490 and result from open pollination among the extensive collection of maple species nearby. Optimum germination results from one month of cold stratification prior to sowing the seeds.

### ***Securinega suffruticosa*—fountain hardhack**

Changes in landscape style require that nurserymen and landscape designers seek desirable characteristics from little known plants. This allows new planting combinations and a move away from the standard and sometimes boring palette usually employed in the field of planting design.

One shrub in which I find desirable characteristics is *Securinega suffruticosa* in the *Euphorbiaceae*. Native to north east Asia it was first introduced to cultivation in North America by the Arnold Arboretum in 1881. The primary feature which I admire is the habit. It matures to a plant bearing branches which first take an upright character gradually arching outward and down creating a cascade like effect. This cascade is enhanced in the autumn when the foliage becomes a clear, bright butter yellow. This saturated color combines with a delicate airy texture to give the effect of a golden waterfall. Winter also captures a pleasing effect for the plant tends to be a colony of twiggy stems appearing like a miniature woodland. Current season stems are a bright green all summer long. In the fall they turn a light tan brown providing a visual winter contrast against the darker browns and blacks of nearby shrubs and trees.

The habit of the plant varies with age and vigor. At the Arboretum a planting approximately 5-years old grows in full sun at the top of a dry bank. Here the plants range in height from 5 to 8 ft tall and an overall upright habit. At another location a planting approximately 10-years old standing in dappled shade have grown 3 to 4 ft tall with a strongly arching habit. Much older plantings also share this size and shape.

The foliage is alternate, with a simple, entire, elliptic to ovate shape. The summer color is a bright yellowish green which allows it to be mixed with other plants to create compositions of shape, texture and form.

Flowering occurs in late summer. The plant bears a multitude of small greenish yellow flowers borne in the leaf axils and the blossoms will be missed by all but the most observant. The fruit is the size of a small peppercorn which ripens from pale

green to brown at maturity. Fruits are divided into three sections, bearing three to six seeds. I have discovered that at some point of ripeness or dryness the capsules burst open and fling out their contents, reaching distances of 3 to 5 ft or more. Germination trials shows that optimum results occur after 3 months of cold stratification.

As a wild plant we have the following record from a recent collection, Arnold Arboretum #625-85, provided us by the Research Institute of Ecology and Botany in Vacratot, Hungary. Seeds were collected from the wild in north Korea during autumn 1984 from "a mixed, rocky, broad-leaved forest and pinewood on hills West from Pyongyang City at 300 meters altitude on granite." The Flora of Japan by Jisaburo Ohwi says that plants grow in thickets and grassy slopes in lowlands of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu where it is a common native plant.

At the Arnold Arboretum these plants thrive in full sun to light shade and they seem to be exceptionally tolerant of dry to droughty soils. To my knowledge we have never had any dieback resulting from winter damage or summer heat and drought. The plant grows at The University of Massachusetts in Amherst, which is in USDA Zone 5. It appears that plants will not tolerate heavy or poorly drained soils nor an exposure of more than moderate shade. Spontaneous seedlings occur occasionally suggesting that it has the potential to become invasive.

From a design viewpoint I believe that the plants would make excellent thickets for border plantings in parks or smaller scale residential landscapes especially for autumn and winter viewing. From their graceful habit, drought tolerance and toughness I wonder if they might not make ideal subjects for large landscape containers, rooftops or as delicate barriers for median strips of highways. I can imagine how lovely a mass of this would be standing behind a stone wall and faced down to the wall with a bold sweep of *Pennisetum alopecuroides*

*Securinega suffruticosa* is a shrub deserving wider landscape trials to learn of its full potential and adaptability. Help learn more about it by taking seeds home, grown plants and conduct your own evaluation!