

My Trip to Denmark and Sweden as the 2003 Exchange Propagator[®]

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Imagine my amazement when I received a call from Margot Bridgen, Eastern Region Executive Secretary, telling me that I had been selected to be the Exchange Propagator to Scandinavia for 2003! What an honor! Many thanks to the Eastern Region Board of Directors! What follows is an account of my trip to Denmark and Sweden in September of 2003.

Following Margot's phone call, I received an e-mail from Lars Sangaard, Secretary/Treasurer of I.P.P.S. Scandinavian Region, asking me what I wanted to see and do. Since I am relatively new to the art of propagation, I asked to see a broad representation of what Denmark had to offer. In addition, I wanted to see gardens since part of my job entails garden design. Finally, I wanted to learn about Denmark's history, culture, and people. Many thanks to Lars for patiently answering all my questions!

We (my husband and I) left Washington, D.C. at 7:30 PM 13 Sept. and flew overnight on Scandinavian Airlines to Copenhagen, arriving early Sunday morning 14 Sept. I must say that the airline fed us well. We were stuffed by the time we arrived. Arne Skytt Andersen greeted us at the Copenhagen airport, drove us through thick fog to the hotel to drop off our luggage and then gave us a wonderful horticultural and historical tour of Copenhagen (Copenhagen). We started off with the Orsted's Park, a small gem in the middle of the city and then moved on to the Kings Garden (built by Christian IV in 1606), which surrounds the Rosenborg Slot (castle). Several areas in this garden made an impression on me. Long allees of pruned linden trees crisscrossed the gardens. Huge old beech trees dotted the expansive lawns, which were lined with extensive beech hedges. Arne commented that Denmark is a country of beech trees and one can see they are utilized in the landscape. To one side of the castle was a formal rose garden with boxwood parterres. There were signs at the entrance to the garden stating the garden was to be completely renovated since a fungus had attacked the boxwood. Finally, in another part of the park, a new garden had just been installed using espaliered apple and pear trees on a stainless steel frame to delineate the design. Very sleek looking! We then went on to see the Little Mermaid only to learn that she had been vandalized and "was on vacation"! The fog had lifted by that time and, at our next stop, we were greeted with a wonderful view of the Queen's palace and the formal garden, Amaliehaven, which bordered the harbor. Across the harbor was a harbor crane dating from the 16th century. We finished the morning with a visit to the Danish Royal Library garden. After a lunch in the open air of the town hall plaza, we traveled to Hillerod to see the formal gardens of Fredericksborg Slot. Although the waterfalls in the garden were being reconstructed, the parterre garden was magnificent as were the huge old rhododendrons (8–10 ft tall). We finished the day with dinner at Tivoli amusement park (built in 1843) with Arne and his wife Lorna. The next morning we went to the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (from which Arne had just retired) to visit the research greenhouses and the surrounding gardens. Hedging is a tradition with the Danes and there in the garden various plants were being

tried to observe their suitability for hedging. I saw *Malus toringo* subsp. *sargentii* (*Malus sargentii*), *Amelanchier*, *Ribes*, *Crataegus*, *Acer campestre*, and *Cornus mas*, to name a few. We then went to the extensive Botanical Gardens associated with the Agricultural University.

After a mad dash to the train station, we left Copenhagen and headed to the island of Fyn and the hospitality of Per and Marianne Andesen. Per picked us up at the train station and headed to Nyborg Slot, a castle built around 1200 which served as the seat of power for almost 200 years. We then traveled to Glorup to see a private manor house. The grounds, open to the public, were home to amazingly old beech trees. Per talked about the difficulties encountered by the owners of large estates in paying the taxes imposed by the government. Many have been forced to sell off land or even the contents of their homes to meet their obligations and many were unable to maintain the gardens. After our hike, it was off to home to meet Marianne, Frederic, and Thea. Wonderful food and great conversation was enjoyed by all that evening! The next day, Marianne and I headed to P. Kortegaards Planteskole, owned by Jorn Jorgensen, a large tree nursery on about 90 ha near Gislev. The nursery is a client of Marianne's new company, Hortus Advising, a consulting firm. We then went on to see the demonstration gardens of the Daehnfeldt Seed Co., a breeder of vegetable and flower seed near Odense. It's here I saw a new concept in marketing plants for hedges—the "instant" hedge (a ready to plant pruned hedge)! We headed onto Langeskov Planteskole, a retail garden center that had previously done production but the owner was ill. Here is where I first observed the Danish tradition of gravesite gardens. There were nice display gardens surrounding the center and a segment was devoted to the display of sample gravesite designs for the benefit of the customer. During this time, my husband, a middle school instrumental music teacher, made a visitation to the local elementary school music classes. We all headed home for lunch and then met Per and the children at Egeskov Slot, one of Europe's finest examples of a moated castle. The grounds have been developed to attract the public with gardens designed by Danish artist Peit Hein, a children's playground done in conjunction with Kompan, a treetop walk and a museum for vintage motorcycles, cars, and airplanes. The gardens surrounding the castle are extensive with yew hedges dating from 1730, 40- to 60-year-old fuschias, a parterre garden, and numerous animal topiaries. They had a bamboo maze, which, unfortunately, bloomed and died. On Wednesday, we spent the day at a nursery conference at the Danish Agricultural Research Station at Arslev. Here I met Anton Thomsen, whose nursery I would visit later. He was going on vacation and would not be there. I also met Martin Jensen, a researcher at the experiment station who is quite knowledgeable about seed propagation. We had a good discussion about the recalcitrance of trillium seeds and agreed to correspond in the future. The day was filled with presentations on various topics involving current research at the station, which Marianne graciously translated for me. One talk, which interested me was research done on the effect of grass on the growth of field-grown trees. Findings indicate that grass competes with the trees and reduces overall size. The difference between trees grown with grass and without grass was quite dramatic. We spent our last evening with the Andersen's and, like all the other evenings, had a wonderful time.

The next day Per Andersen took my husband and I to visit Midtffyns (MidFyn) Bo Gront Havecenter owned by Hennine Frediksen (one in a chain of garden centers)

near Odense. I was impressed with the artfully crafted displays. In addition, they sold wine, linens, an extensive inventory of color-coordinated glazed pottery, and had a cafe and an exotic bird display for the children. I was to see this in almost all the garden centers I visited. We then went to Odense to see the house of H.C. Andersen in the old part of the city. As luck would have it, the house was undergoing renovations and closed to the public. Per then took us on an historical walking tour of Odense. We then visited the offices of the Danish Garden Center Association of which Per is the Executive Director. In the same complex were the offices of the Danish Nursery Association, The Pot Plant Growers Association, Insurance for Nurseries, and the Union for Agricultural Technicians. He and his staff, Bent Leonhard and Quy Thanh Nguyen, demonstrated the labeling system using a centralized database the Danish Garden Center Association had developed for garden center use. After lunch we went to Kolding to visit the Geografick Have (geographic garden) founded by Aksel Olsen (1887-1995) a nursery owner who developed this garden divided into geographic regions.

With Per at the wheel, we traveled across the bridge from Fyn into Jutland and on to Majlands Perennial Nursery, a wholesale nursery specializing in alpiners. Leif Rabeck gave us a tour of the nursery. The nursery was the first place I saw sandy soil in Denmark. Fyn soil had more clay while Jutland, covered by glaciers during the last ice age, tended to be very sandy and more acidic with heather growing wild. As in most nurseries, rows of evergreens were planted as wind breaks dividing the nursery into sections. This was the only nursery I saw that grew trilliums. Here we met Lars Sangaard who was to be our host for the next few days. We traveled on to Billund to meet Anne, Lars' fiancé, and Sophus, their black Labrador puppy.

On Friday, Lars took us to Legland to see the incredible landscaping. The first display was Miniatureland where such places as the Berlin Airport, Nyhaven, Amaliehaven, the Queens palace, and an oil rig in the north sea complete with choppy sea were recreated using nothing but Legos (the water was real). Every display contained live miniaturized plants. The rest of the park was landscaped with plants such as *Spiraea betulifolia*, *Liquidambar*, *Stephanandra incisa* 'Crispa', and *Prunus lauracerasus* 'Otto Luyken'. Legoland has entered into a partnership with "Group Unique", a consortium of growers, to trial plants in the park. After lunch, we went to visit an old Danish country store and museum followed by a visit to the Robert Jakobsen Sculpture Park housed in the Torskind gravel pit south of Billund. We traveled to Herning the next day to visit Kollund Planteskole, a nursery and garden center owned by Iver Andersen. Lars, who is in charge of production there, gave us the grand tour of all the production areas of the nursery. One of their specialties is *Fragaria vesca*. We then went on to Herning, famous for clothes design, to see the ceramic mural on the exterior of the Carl-Henning Peterson Kunt Museum and the large, fire-breathing sculpture, Elia. We then went to see Den Japanske Have (the Japanese Garden) in Hammerum...a truly amazing place. We finished the day in Herning at the brew pub, Bryggeriet. The next day, Lars drove us to Aarhus to visit the botanic garden greenhouse belonging to the University of Aarhus. Here we met Kai Lonne Neilsen. We said our goodbyes to Lars and spent the rest of the afternoon wandering through Den Gamle by (The Old City) a collection of preserved homes and shops from the 15th–18th century as well as a recreated medicinal garden and vegetable garden. We then went to Kai's home in Hinnerup where we met Judy, Kai's wife, and their children, Sophia and Clara. We enjoyed a

wonderful meal and then spent the evening getting to know each other. The next morning Kai took us to Knud Jepsen A/S, where he is Research and Development Manager. Knud Jepsen Nursery produces only kalanchoe, specializing in 35–40 different cultivars of 'African Queen' in 10 ha of greenhouses with employees using bicycles and scooters to get around the vast complex. The facility is heated with six natural gas generators producing 1000 kilowatts of electricity with the excess hot water heating the greenhouses. They propagate approximately 30 million cuttings a year, selling 14 million pots and 15 million cuttings to North America, Japan, and Europe. Parasitic wasps, propagated on flats of cereal aphid infested barley, are used as a biological control for aphids.

Claus Kragh Sorensen, son of one of Knud Jepsen's employees, drove us to Skalborg, just south of Aalborg, to meet Jesper Hannibalsen at the Thomsen Planteskole, the 5th largest nursery, garden center and landscaping firm in Denmark. Jesper was the first Scandinavian Exchange Propagator to visit the U.S.A. He now works as a salesman for the nursery. The nursery was founded by Martin Thomsen in 1935 in Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Martin moved it to Denmark and now it is run by his son Anton Thomsen, whom I met in Odense at the Agricultural Research Station Conference. The nursery specializes in conifers, producing $\frac{1}{2}$ million each year with 50% exported to Sweden and Norway and the rest going to landscapers. In addition, they produce 30,000 shrubs each year with rhododendron sales growing. We then went home to meet Vivi, Jesper's fiancé, their little 1-year-old girl, Milla and Sidus, their Dalmatian. To pass the time, we took a walk in the woods behind their house. I discovered that flint is a common mineral in this part of Denmark. They also have ants whose urine stings. What a great time to visit Denmark...new potatoes are delicious!! Vivi fixed "Kold Skal" for dessert, a cold buttermilk soup served with Kammerjunkere or dime sized vanilla wafers. Yummy!! The next day, Jesper and Vivi had planned to lend us their second car so we could drive up to Skagen, but it had been vandalized. Instead, Vivi very kindly set up a school visitation for my husband, so I spent the morning practicing my presentation for the I.P.P.S. conference to be held later that week in Swede. Later, we went to lunch in Aalborg and that afternoon, after her classes were over, Vivi and Milla took us to see Troldkirke, a stone-age graveyard and church. We stopped at a nearby church graveyard to look at the gravesites since they were such wonderful examples of small garden design.

The next afternoon, we left for O Grevie, Sweden, with Jesper driving myself, Larry (my husband), and Steen Neilsen, another employee of Thomsen's Nursery. Just before we crossed the bridge into Sweden, we stopped at Planteriget (Plant Kingdom), a newly constructed state-of-the-art garden center.

Sweden (Sverige in Danish) and Denmark have open borders...no one stopped us. O (East) Grevie is a small town in the southern part of Sweden. The Scandinavian Region I.P.P.S. Conference was held at the Osatra Grevie Folkhögskola, a folk high school. It was explained to me that these schools serve to help people "find themselves". I would compare it to "prep" schools in the U.S.A. somewhat. These schools also act as conference centers offering housing and meals. The evening before the conference began found eight of us hunting for a place to have supper. Around 8 PM, we found a wonderful little restaurant. The chef, a woman, came out to see how we liked it and wanted to know what was wrong if someone had not finished his or her meal. She was a stitch. I do remember Henrik Stridh having a hot fudge sundae and a beer for dinner. Sorry, Henrik.

The conference began on Thursday morning at Bara Mineraler Tegelmester, about a $\frac{1}{2}$ h from O Grevie. (They say it's a small world. We met Tor and Live Fiveland from Norway. She had spent a summer in Vermont in her youth. We discovered we had mutual friends.) The conference started with a number of talks (in Danish) at Torups, originally the country estate of the daughter of Christain IV, and now a recreational site belonging to the city of Malmo. We returned to Bava Mineraler where Goran Marsson, one of the owners, gave us a tour of the factory. Bara Mineraler produces approximately 30,000 tons of clay a year, which is mixed with sphagnum to produce a potting medium. It is special clay, only about 10,000 years old and very clean. Pumice from Iceland was also put forth as a potting medium. Lunch followed at a nearby golf club, a pastime gaining popularity in Denmark. Next we traveled to Kjell-Ingvars Greenhouses, a production facility owned by Fisher, a German company, which produces young plants and liners. The manager giving the tour said that the Swedish greenhouse industry is small. We then headed north past Lund to visit Kronmull, a 200-ha peat farm taking about 100 yards³ of peat a day every day from an 8000-year-old peat bog. While most peat was used to heat homes at one time, the peat produced from this bog is used exclusively for horticulture purposes. Approximately 12 more years of production are left before all the peat is removed. All the tractors were equipped with fire extinguishers since spontaneous combustion can be a problem.

Friday was the last day of the conference. The morning was filled with lectures centered on peat moss since it is the primary component of the potting media used in Scandinavia. The industry had had problems with it several years ago and there has been much research to determine the cause. The entire conference was conducted in either Danish or Swedish so what I am relating to you here was gleaned from people either volunteering to translate or my asking questions. I gave a slide presentation on "Propagation Protocol for Trilliums" based on an article I wrote for the Native Plant Journal just before lunch. After lunch, we boarded a bus and traveled north to Helsingborg to visit Splendor Plant Nursery, one of the biggest nurseries in Sweden. They produce conifers and perennials in 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -L pots anchored to the ground (it's very windy) using a medium they mix themselves of young, coarse peat moss with rock wool and wood shavings. Watering is done with a traveling irrigation boom. We returned to O Grevie, said our thank yous and goodbyes to everyone and headed to Ystad with Henrik Stridh staying at his parents summer cottage. We discovered a wonderful restaurant right around the corner and had a lovely evening meal there with Henrik and his fiancé, Maria. The next morning we rose early and caught the train to Malmo where we changed trains and headed to the Copenhagen airport. Our flight left around noon and we arrived home safely. Here's the short speech I gave in Danish at the end of my slide presentation. "Tak far at have kunnet bo hos jer som Exchange Propagator fra U.S.A. Jeg har lart en masse om formering i Danmark og Sverige. Jeg orisker at takke alle personerne som har haft min mand og jeg i jeres hjem og rist os Danmark og Sverige. (Translation: Thank you for hosting me as the Exchange Propagator from the U.S.A. I have learned a lot about propagation in Denmark and Sweden. I want to thank all the people who had my husband and I in their homes and showed us Denmark and Sweden.)

I want to thank all the people who went out of their way to host us, taking time out of their busy schedules to show us what Denmark had to offer in the way of horticulture, culture, and history. They drove us all over their country, fed us, gave us a place to sleep and made us feel very welcome. This was a truly remarkable trip...one that we will never forget! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!!