

THE HORT REPORT

NEWSLETTER OF THE MARYLAND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY, INC | FALL 2022



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LAKE ROLAND BARRENS

REMEMBERING JOHN SANDERS

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AND MORE...



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nancy Raskin

I'm excited to share with you that I am again serving as the President of the Horticultural Society of Maryland, and I began my new term on July 1.

First, I would like to thank Peter Bieneman for serving the last two terms as President. Peter did a wonderful job all around, and he kept things on track, with the added complication of the pandemic. I also want to thank our members, sponsors (of our lectures and the garden tour), speakers, board members, and the staff at Cylburn. We couldn't have survived the last two years without you and your support.

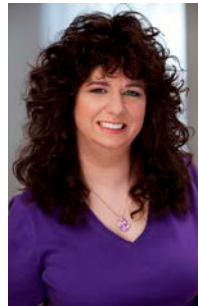
For those who don't know me, I have been on the HSM board since 2010. The first four years, I served as the Vice President for Membership, the second four years as President, and the last four years as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board.

Thanks to my mother, Dorrie Wilfong, I not only developed a love of plants and gardening, but also learned about HSM. I can't imagine my life without both.

I am honored to have been elected as President once more, and I look forward to helping HSM move forward.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Michele "Wojo" Wojciechowski



You may have noticed that a few things are different in this newsletter. Me, for example. Before I tell you about myself, I'd like to thank former longtime editor Harry Merritt and designer Paula A. Simon. I appreciate your advice as I take on this new position.

As for me, I've run my writing and editing business, Wojo Enterprises, LLC, for, well, let's just say longer than two decades and shorter than seven—although I'd love to be writing that long. My articles have appeared in publications you may know such as *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair*, *Parade*, *Reader's Digest*, *Discover* (the science magazine), *PBS' Next Avenue*, *Baltimore Magazine*, and countless others—as well as in some you probably haven't, like *Minority Nurse* and *Chiropractic Economics*. If you're local, you may recognize me because I edited the now-defunct *Valley Times* magazine for 15 years. We had a gardening column in the publication every month, but I'm looking forward to learning so much more through HSM.

Oh, and I've known Peter Bieneman since the second day of college. But don't hold that against me. (I've also written and performed stand-up comedy since I was 18, written a humor column called *Wojo's World* since 2003, and written a national award-winning humor book titled *Next Time I Move, They'll Carry Me Out in a Box*.)

I grew up in the area of Highlandtown in Baltimore City that is called Brewers Hill, but now live with my husband and our two dogs in Baltimore County. Boy, was that a change! But I'll tell you more about that and my stand-up comedy another time.

I'd also like to welcome new designer of *The Hort Report*, Sharon L. Forrence. Although she's been a teacher, a potter, and a librarian, Sharon finally landed in graphic design. She attended MICA and has been living the dream ever since. She also takes fantastic—and lots of—photos of flowers (and cats and dogs).

I also want to thank my longtime friend Peter Bieneman for introducing me to HSM. Thanks also to Jennifer Forrence, Nancy Blois, Heather Rosenthal, and Sarah Atherton for helping me get this first newsletter off the ground—so to speak. (I promise to come up with better gardening jokes in the future.)

I look forward to meeting HSM members. In the meantime, if you have any ideas for stories or suggestions for future issues of *The Hort Report*, feel free to email me at TheMicheleWojo@gmail.com. And if you'd like to write about something, definitely get in touch!

I'm so excited to be working with all of you. Here we go...

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The Plant Collective: LAKE ROLAND'S BARE HILLS SERPENTINE BARRENS

By: Rosie Wolf Williams

When you hear the word “serpentine,” you may think of the gliding movement of snakes. But the Bare Hills Serpentine Barrens isn’t named for these reptiles, but instead for a type of metamorphic rock that lies close to the earth’s surface. This rock—serpentine or serpentinite—plays a role in creating a rare plant community that the Lake Roland Nature Council and other groups are striving to protect.

“There are very few examples of this plant community in Maryland and, indeed, in the world,” says Peter Lev, Chair of Lake Roland’s Environmental Committee. “At Lake Roland, the serpentine barrens were neglected for many years. But the Lake Roland Nature Council, in collaboration with Baltimore County and the Guilford Garden Club, is working to maintain and restore them.”

Serpentine barrens are all similar in the nature of their creation, but are often unique in their plant communities. When two of the earth’s tectonic plates move toward each other and one slides under the other, that area is called a subduction zone. Serpentine barrens are created in these subduction zones.

The resulting shallow layers of soil in these zones are rich in metals including chromium, copper, iron, and magnesium. “Serpentine barrens are the meadows that form in shallow serpentine soil,” says Lev. “Many plants will not grow in this soil, especially since it is low in calcium and phosphorous. So the biological community would consist of plants that thrive in this soil. There are about 15 serpentine barrens on the U.S. East Coast, mainly in Pennsylvania and Maryland, and these support, basically, the same plants.”

“Generally, you will find more serpentine on the coasts because it is created in a subduction zone,” says Dwight Johnson, a member of the Maryland Native Plant Society and the board of directors of the Lake Roland Nature Council. “Maryland and southern Pennsylvania are the biggest outcrops, and Soldiers Delight is probably the biggest. There are not many natural barrens left on the east coast of the United States.”

The Bare Hills serpentine barrens consist of pine woodlands, grassland, and scrub, and the area is managed to prevent the encroachment of the pine woodland and scrub habitat on the grassland. The [post oak](#) (*Quercus stellata*) and the [blackjack oak](#) (*Quercus marilandica*) are two important plants in the barrens. The post oak is tolerant of the heavy metals contained in the subduction zone. The blackjack oak is a tree that enjoys dry, acidic soil, a comfortable companion to the post oak in the serpentine barrens.

“Of all the plants that are a part of this rare global plant community, the [fameflower](#) (*Phemeranthus teretifolium*) is the one you might think about when you think of serpentine barrens,” says Johnson. Fameflower, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, is an S2 plant. The designation means that it is at very “high risk of extinction or extirpation due to very restricted range, very few populations or occurrences, very steep declines, very severe threats, or other factors,” says the website, “and is typically occurring in five or fewer populations.” The fameflower only blooms for a few hours in one afternoon, waiting for a passing pollinator. But if it is not fertilized, it will close and fertilize itself.

Another S2 plant, [Scribner’s witch grass](#) or Scribner’s panic grass (*Dichanthelium oligosanthos var. scribnerianum*) is a tufted perennial grass that also grows in the serpentine barrens. The name comes from the seed head of the grass, which resembles the sweeping end of a witch’s broom.

An additional plant found in the barrens is the whorled [milkweed](#) (*Asclepia verticillata*), a smaller species of milkweed. This species, categorized as an S3 plant, is an important host plant for the ever-decreasing population of the monarch butterfly.

The [state list](#) defines S3 plants as vulnerable and on a watchlist, “at moderate risk of extinction or extirpation due to a fairly restricted range, relatively few populations or occurrences, recent and widespread declines, threats, or other factors. Typically occurring in 21-80 populations.”

Johnson points out that another S3 plant of the Bare Hills serpentine barrens, the [annual fimbry](#) (*Fimbristylis annua*), can easily be forgotten because of its diminutive size. “You might not even think about the fimbry, because it’s such a little, tiny thing. It’s just a slight little plant, but it is one of four of the rare plants that we have up there,” he says. “Even if none of the plants were globally rare, if you want to see that mixture of four plants, you’ve got to go to a serpentine barren.”

Lev noted another barrens’ plant that plays a role in the support of pollinators. “We saw a few lingering flowers of Lyre-leaved [Rock Cress](#) (*Arabidopsis lyrata*) which blooms in April. This plant is notable as the host plant of the [Falcate Orangetip butterfly](#), which is hard to find in Maryland except at Soldiers Delight and Bare Hills Barrens,” he says.

While it’s working to save much of the barrens, the Lake Roland Nature Council is also working to eradicate one member of the plant family there—the highly invasive [Miscanthus sinensis](#). Commonly known as Chinese silver grass, this beautiful, tall ornamental grass threatens the delicate balance of the barrens, by spreading both seeds and rhizomes. It is also very flammable and could endanger large swaths of the barrens if a fire were to occur. Volunteers have already removed tons of the plant from sites within the serpentine barrens and continue to find the salt-resistant and deer-resistant plant growing there.

If you would like to visit [Lake Roland](#), the main entrance is at 1000 Lakeside Drive, Baltimore, Maryland, with an additional access from the Falls Road MTA light rail station.



Photos courtesy of Lake Roland Nature Center.

Remembering John Sanders (1954–2022)

By: Kate Blom, Michael Rosendale, and Roberta Cowan

Every so often in life, we recognize that we have been fortunate enough to have been part of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, a magical time so precious that we remember each moment with relish.

In August 1990, for many budding horticulturists on the campus of CCBC Dundalk, it was this kind of time. That's when John Sanders arrived at the school and immediately set about creating a world-class Ornamental Horticulture Program.

Born on October 1, 1954, John grew up in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. He received his bachelor's degree in Ornamental Horticulture with honors from North Carolina State University, where he studied with J.C. Raulston. He later earned his master's degree with honors in Landscape Design from the University of Georgia, studying under Michael Dirr.

Tall, intense, and energetic, John seemed to be everywhere all at once. After his arrival, the number of classes offered in the program began to expand, with John himself teaching many of them. He was naturally gifted at helping students understand all aspects of horticulture, including landscape maintenance, nursery design, greenhouse design, and landscape graphics. John gathered a group of excellent teachers, and added plant identification courses, landscape mechanics (plumbing, electricity, welding, etc.), and, of course, the business of horticulture. In addition, he developed relationships with the major horticultural concerns and businesses in the area, and they responded positively and gratefully, as they were hungry for the professionals the program was producing.

No one knew the value of creating strong relationships like John. He developed connections within the Perennial Plant Association, the Horticulture Society of Maryland, the American Association of Botanical Gardens, the Maryland Public Gardens Consortium, and the Howard P. Rawlings Conservatory. As a man with

Many of us were so extremely fortunate to work with and learn from John Sanders. He will be greatly missed.

vision, John worked tirelessly—often using his own resources—to create the absolute best horticulture program in the area.

When John came to Baltimore, he made it his business to get to know the major players in the field of horticulture. His teaching was very much hands-on, and he often involved the industry, including having its members teach classes or segments of them. From the beginning, he made it a priority to build up instructional resources. He taught his students how to build a greenhouse, and from this greenhouse, he taught many of the new courses that he was developing: Nursery & Greenhouse Management, Plant Propagation, Landscape Design, Installation, and Construction among many others.

John understood that building gardens also built community, and, as the campus was a blank canvas when he arrived, there were many opportunities for students to construct design-build projects using the skills they developed in class.

The excitement and confidence of students increased, and as word of the program spread, it began to attract more students of unconventional ages—from 18 to about 75—and from different social and educational strata—some with no previous degrees and others with master's degrees. As the community grew, students were helping one another not only in the classroom, but also by studying together, supporting the program, and joining in extracurricular activities. John made sure that all were welcomed and accepted, and the relationships that developed in those years have often lasted long after graduation.



Because he understood the nature of the industry, John also connected the program to nurseries as well as wholesale and retail outlets, so students could both learn from experience and apply what they learned. These relationships in the greater Baltimore area and up and down both coasts are one reason this program stands out. He reached out to everyone and partnered with many. His participation in the Home and Garden Show each year gave the program considerable exposure and was a great experience for the students who installed the exhibit.

J.C. Raulston suggested to John that for students to learn about gardens and understand their nature, they should visit them. John wholly agreed with the idea. He then organized trips designed to introduce students to as many gardens and ideas of gardens as possible. Anyone lucky enough to join him on one of these to New York, Chicago, Toronto, Vancouver, Oregon, Boston, England, or New England will remember with fondness “fat hours and skinny hours,” travel with interesting friends and colleagues, wonderful meals together, and much joy and laughter.

John's legacy remains in the beautiful niche gardens that he helped to create and in a generation of designers, managers, landscapers, and gardeners who now continue to work in the Baltimore area and elsewhere.

In 2004, John moved back to North Carolina and settled in Asheville, where he worked as a gallerist until he retired in 2020. He passed away from pancreatic cancer on April 2, 2022 at Bon Secours Hospice in Richmond, Virginia with his dearest friends Joni and Phill Hunt at his side.



Plant This!

By: Jennifer Forrence

This new column will feature a favorite seasonal plant of an HSM member.

In my garden, almost every plant has to earn its place the whole growing season. Good foliage is critical to me, and a plant's texture and form should complement and contrast well with neighboring plants. Ideally, dramatic flowering displays (or other dramatic displays, like fall color) should punctuate the backdrop of plant texture and form. Needless to say, this ideal is not always achieved, as I am as susceptible as any gardener to the lure of a flashy plant or description in a nursery or catalog.

About five years ago, I purchased a very small plant (probably at Cylburn Market Day, though the specifics have left my brain), stuck it in the midst of a mixed border under the high canopy of a magnificent sycamore, and promptly forgot about it. It got irrigated by rain when Mother Nature came through. At some point, it must have been knocked over or perhaps it was just planted hastily and not quite straight. The result was a decidedly lax habit, with the stem traveling along horizontally before heading skyward. When I noticed this, I considered digging it up and replanting. But at least it was growing, so I decided to let it be.

I knew its name—*Magnolia ashei* or *Magnolia macrophylla* var. *ashei* (or subsp. *ashei*). I definitely didn't understand its tremendous charm and beauty. Sort of a shrub version of its kin, *Magnolia macrophylla*, *M. ashei* has tremendous leaves—oblong-obovate, green on the top and silvery grey underneath—as long as 2 to 3 feet and as wide as a foot. Did I mention tropical? The size of the leaves means they flutter with any wind and are a wonderful contrast to the ferns, carex, and other shade plants that thrive in the same understory.

Native to a small part of the panhandle of Florida, *M. ashei* looks like it would be at home there. But fortunately for us, in Maryland, it is fairly hardy. Mine thrives in a zone 6B garden. And heat and humidity don't faze it. Even if it didn't bloom, its lovely foliage would entitle the plant to its place in the garden. Its stature—perhaps 10–20' tall—means it could fit even in a small garden. To keep it in bounds, you can easily prune it.

Last year, I was more than delighted when I saw the first blooms emerge. The off-kilter planting had resulted in multiple stems, and each of them was topped first with an enormous light green bulb and then a massive chalice-like white flower, which then flattens to reach 6–12" across! The flowers opened somewhat in succession, so that the display lasted several weeks in early June. This year, with more growth, there were even more flowers—both on the top and on side branches.

The straight species of *M. macrophylla* sports this same bloom, but because it is a large tree, it is hard to appreciate and enjoy them. With *M. ashei*, some of the breathtaking blooms are right at eye level. Although the literature reports that the bloom is fragrant, I haven't yet detected much of a scent, which is the only thing that could add to the perfection of this wonderful plant with dramatic foliage all year and a show-stopping June bloom.

Sources: Kollar Nursery, Pylesville Maryland (containerized plants), Raemelton Farm, Adamstown, Maryland (larger B&B sized).



Farmers & Gardens & Demos — *Oh My!*

On May 10th, the HSM held an in-person event at Cylburn, “Back in the Garden,” with a plant swap, book give away, live demonstrations and food vendors, in conjunction with our annual tool drive. We welcomed farmers from the Farm Alliance of Baltimore (FAB) (farmalliancebaltimore.org), the recipient of the tools.

Members of the Black Butterfly Urban Farmer Academy joined us too. It was a festive event, and we wanted to learn more about the farms. Late in August, we went on a tour of some of the FAB gardens. We thought we'd share a few of the amazing gardens we saw and introduce you to various people we met.

ABOVE: Maya Kosok gathers marigolds at Hillen Homestead. Using sustainable growing methods. Maya grows over 80 kinds of flowers and foliage, focusing on unusual varieties that don't ship well. In addition to supplying flowers and foliage to florists in Baltimore and the DC area, Hillen Homestead offers seasonal subscriptions, gives bouquets to neighbors, and shares seeds, compost, and plants with nearby gardeners.



Imagine the gentle clucking of chickens in Greenmount West. A chicken co-op makes its home at Hidden Harvest. Eggs are shared among those who feed and care for the chickens.



Maya's daughter assists in harvesting. White Dahlia buds are covered to protect from insects.



Hidden Harvest is a community garden co-operative in Greenmount West. Volunteers tend to a three-quarter acre bountiful garden where the labor and an amazing variety of produce are shared by volunteers. One corner of the garden even includes a small gathering space with room for intimate performances.





ABOVE: Shanice and Ciara, Black Butterfly Academy Class of 2022, Lavette Blue, and Alison Worman, FAB Program Manager, man the FAB stand at Waverly Market. Check out their stand for a variety of produce from some of the farms.



RIGHT: Grayson Bo Guthrie of Alchemist Flowers sells beautiful blooms at the Waverly Market. Their sunny smile competes with the gorgeous flowers.



ABOVE: Liz Twigg prepares to plant lettuce seedlings for fall harvest at Hidden Harvest.



2022 HSM GARDEN TOUR AND WORKSHOP SERIES

This year, in lieu of the “big” garden tour, the HSM organized a series of garden visits and workshops.

In May, about 50 happy members made the trek to Frederick County for a memorable visit to Raemelton Farm as well as the private garden of Dan Weil and Jim Dronenburg.

In June, IPM expert Heather Zindash led a fascinating walk focused on plant pests and diseases. A visit to several gardens in historic Dickeyville had to be cancelled because of the tree damage from a particularly violent storm. Look for that tour to be rescheduled. Later in the month, Naturalists Peter Lev and Dwight Johnson led us on a walk through the globally rare plant community at Lake Roland. And, finally, Manor View Farm hosted an informative tour and propagation workshop at the end of the month.

August featured a visit to the beautiful dahlia garden at Cylburn Arboretum with advice on their care and tending by Nancy Blois, the caretaker of the garden. We also toured several gardens in Elkridge, including member Nancy Grabowski’s amazing garden. We wrapped up the late summer with a September walking tour of the Jones Falls Trail with Janet Felsten, Founder/ Director of the Baltimore Green Map.



Thank you to our generous sponsors!



UPCOMING LECTURES:

Benjamin Vogt

October 11, 7:00 PM, Virtual

**Designing for Winter Beauty
and Wildlife**

Thank you to our October lecture sponsor!



John Lonsdale

November 8, 7:30 PM, Vollmer Center

Unusual Bulbs for the Garden

David Thompson

December 13, 7:30 PM, Vollmer Center

**Beautiful Evergreens for the
Garden and Cutting**

Thank you to our December lecture sponsor!





Welcome to New Members!

The HSM and the Hort Report would like to introduce and give a hearty welcome to our newest members:

- Lauren Bell
- Julianna Blagg
- Anthony Carr
- Jennifer Cason
- Charm City Landscapes
- Jeanne DeMos
- Rita Dharmavaram
- Natalie Fern
- Nathifa Greene
- Judy Komins Rasheita
- Magor Mullan Nursery
- Elizabeth Miller
- Mary Ellen Murphy
- Christine O'hara
- Linda Olson
- JoAnn Palm
- Pamela Palumbo
- Patuxent Nursery
- Malena Renshaw Rose
- of Valhalla Sylvia Scherr
- Jeffrey Smith
- Leslie Stewart
- Hiram Woodward

A donation was made to the Hort Society in memory of Martha Anne Champion by Patuxent Nursery.

Thanks for joining us.
We're glad to have you here!



EXCITING CHANGES COMING TO HSM MEMBERSHIPS

We're making some changes that are going to simplify your membership. Within the next two months, members will be able to:

- Easily renew your membership online
- Immediately view and update your membership details
- Seamlessly register for Hort Society events, while also keeping track of upcoming and past events
- Connect with fellow members via members-only community forums and through an optional member directory.

Stay tuned for more details to come!