The Gardener's Journal

Reynolda Gardens of Wake Forest University

Winter 2007

Gifts Received July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006

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New Boxwood for an Old Garden

by **John Kiger**, *RGWFU assistant manager*

On an uncommonly springlike day in early January, I was working in the formal gardens when I was approached by a woman who was walking with her daughter. She stopped, and we chatted for a moment. As she was about to walk away, she turned back to me and said, "It may be my imagination, but something looks different here." I pointed out that we had recently removed and replanted all of the English boxwood* that encircled portions of the interior of the formal gardens.

Of course, her response was, "Why?"

My reply? Quite simply, "They had a root problem."

With time, all things change, and plant materials are no exception. Some ten years ago, as Reynolda was going through a major renovation, the English boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' had become overgrown. In order to restore the gardens to their former glory, we had to renovate them. We removed approximately two feet in height and four feet in width from each plant. This procedure left some of the plants looking somewhat like topiaries. Visitors commented on our new look, and we explained that the intention was for the shortened shrubs to fill in and re-create the original formal look. We were successful. Over the next few years, sunlight penetrated portions of the plants that had not seen sunlight in decades. New growth sprouted, and the plants began to fill in.

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Between Earth and Sky—the Mysteries of Mistletoe

by **David Bare**, *RGWFU greenhouse manager*

Few plants are imbued with as much mystery as mistletoe. You may have strategically situated yourself under the mistletoe at the office party in hopes of stealing a kiss but not realized you are passing under it every day. Such is the case at least for those traveling Reynolda Road near the entrance to the Village and Gardens. Here, and in many other spots in Winston-Salem, mistletoe is attaching itself to the high branches of maples and oaks. Mistletoe defies close inspection, growing high and out of reach. If we were to get up into the canopy, we would find a leathery, olive green plant with paddle-shaped leaves and translucent white berries.

The mistletoe encountered in the southeastern U.S. is one of two species, *Phoradendron serotinum* or *P. flavens*. Mistletoe is a hemiparasite; it derives some of its nourishment from a host tree but does not necessarily need it to survive. A little

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New Boxwood for an Old Garden

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Within the last three years, however, the staff became aware that our English boxwood were taking a turn for the worse. Leaves were turning yellow and then golden brown. Whole limbs were dying. Trying to preserve them, we removed dead and dying limbs with hopes that remaining limbs would thrive. It was no use.

We knew that the plants' roots had been affected, but we weren't sure of the cause. After extensive research, we found that there were two possible reasons for the problem. The first is called English boxwood decline. This is a slow but progressive decline, occurring primarily in plants twenty years of age or older. It only affects English boxwood and is caused by a combination of fungi and cultural practices. Foliage symptoms develop over a period of one to several years. The earliest symptoms are slightly off-colored areas in the plant. Leaves of affected stems progressively turn bronze, orange, and straw-yellow, finally turning brown and defoliating. Symptoms begin usually following a drought or when the plant is under some type of stress. By the time symptoms are observed, the root system has been severely impaired by root rot.

Another root problem that can occur in boxwood is phytophthora root rot. This is caused by a soil-borne fungus, *Phytophthora parasitica*, which is abundant throughout North Carolina. Most commonly found in poorly drained or saturated soils, it attacks feeder roots, causing a gradual decline in English boxwood. Typically, signs begin with foliage discoloration (which may take years), progressing until foliage turns a golden straw color and defoliates, leaving nothing but a gray skeleton of twigs.

Boxwood hedges outline formal garden "rooms." Photo by Thomas W. Sears, c. 1925.

New plantings require special care, including hand-watering as needed.

Although English boxwood decline and phytophthora root rot are two separately identified problems with English boxwood, both have one common denominator: a fungus that attacks the roots; both have the same result: death of the plant. For a definitive diagnosis, these problems can be determined by the local agriculture office by means of a soil and/or tissue sample.

Preventing Boxwood Problems

Providing optimum growing conditions is the best means of avoiding English boxwood decline. This includes prevention of moisture stress, removal of plant debris, and protection from winter injury. It is especially important to water plants deeply and regularly during drought. It is recommended not to replant English boxwood in areas known to be infected.

When planting new boxwood, be sure to provide the best growing conditions possible. This means digging a hole one-and-a-half times larger than the container. This allows for proper root growth and adequate drainage. Plants also should not be planted deeply. Leave the root ball about an inch above ground and mound up to it. This will assist in proper drainage. If you are using hardwood mulch, spread it lightly around the plant. Boxwood is shallow-rooted, and if mulch is too heavy, it may try to root in the

material, causing the plant stress when the mulch dries.

Phytophthora root rot is harder to deal with. In a recent seminar, the speaker stated that if root rot fungus is present, (determined by a soil sample), do not replant with boxwood since this fungus is soil-borne. Hollies, such as Japanese holly, *Ilex crenata* 'Convexa' should be considered as a replacement, since they provide a boxwood-like appearance.

At Reynolda Gardens, we had no choice but to replant boxwood, which are in keeping with the historical content of the gardens. Once we had all the old boxwood removed, plants in three gallon containers were purchased. New soil, comprised of clay and sand, was purchased, and we used it to backfill all planting areas. The mixed soil will aid drainage, thus reducing the chances of a fungal problem. Boxwood like a soil pH of 6.6 to 7, so lime was added to the entire planting area to raise the pH. Generous holes were dug, and the plants placed at the proper height as mentioned above. A light coating of mulch was added to assist in retaining moisture. Fertilizing lightly with a slow-release fertilizer in late winter or early spring will assure a good flush of growth for the coming year. During the dry summer months, a weekly watering will be essential until the new plants become well established.

Boxwood was introduced to American gardeners in 1652. Since that time, it has continued to be an important element of the landscape in formal gardens, specimens, screens, or simple hedges. It is long-lived and can become quite large. In 1980 I was taking a horticulture class at Surry Community College. During the plant identification class, the instructor took the class a few miles away to see the largest English boxwood I had ever seen. Eight to ten of us were on the field trip, and all of us were able to walk—upright, mind you—into this shrub. As we stood inside, the instructor mentioned that the shrub was destined for the White House.

Our newly planted boxwood will never be as grand as that one. They will grow together to form a hedge surrounding the "rooms" of the formal gardens and will be clipped accordingly when they grow large enough. With special care and attention, they should be here at the turn of the next century.

*The National Boxwood Collection, one of the most complete collections in the world, is located at the National Arboretum. According to the USNA website, the word boxwood is both singular and plural.

The Mysteries of Mistletoe

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rootlike projection called a haustorium penetrates the host and absorbs both water and dissolved minerals found within the sap. Gradually the haustoria extend up and down the interior of the branches. Old mistletoe plants can grow to several feet across. Branches may atrophy and die back beyond the point of attachment. Multiple infections can result in loss of vigor, dieback, and sometimes death. Though it is widely recognized that the species of mistletoe found in the Southeast are relatively harmless to the host, the trees along Reynolda Road show noticeable disfigurement along the infected branches. This condition is known as hypertrophy.

The same cannot be said of the western dwarf mistletoe, *Arceuthobium* spp. that occur on coniferous trees. Extremely invasive and often fatal to the host, the dwarf mistletoe is spread by explosive seed that can reach as far as sixty feet away from the host tree.

Birds relish the fruit of mistletoe. The white berry is covered in a sticky substance called viscin, which birds distribute through their droppings. It is mistletoe's sticky properties that have made it so adept at colonizing high branches in the tops of trees. It also gives rise to the name. Mistletoe is from the Anglo-Saxon words mistel, meaning dung and tan, meaning twig. The botanical name of our native American mistletoe, *Phoradendron* comes from the Greek word phor, which means thief and dendron, which means tree, a reference to the plant's parasitic habits.

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Vegetable Gardening in Containers and Small Spaces

by **Michelle Hawks**, *RGWFU horticulturist*

With today's lifestyle, many homeowners have limited space available for a garden, compared to the more traditional, sprawling country garden. Some would-be gardeners have no home garden space at all. As a result, garden plots are springing up in back yards and front yards, on balconies, and in containers. Although space may limit the amount of vegetables you can grow, you can stretch the space you do have with gardening techniques.

Now that vegetables have taken a more prominent place on the table, they are gaining more respect in the gardening world. With the increased interest from home gardeners, there has been a surge in the development of new, colorful vegetable varieties and compact growers.

Vegetable Gardens in Containers

If a lack of space is your only reason for not having a home vegetable garden, you no longer have an excuse. Seed companies are offering a wide variety of vegetables that are suitable for containers. Even apartment dwellers with only a balcony can enjoy fresh produce grown by their own hands. Any space with ample light and access for watering and fertilizing is appropriate for container gardening, including a window sill, patio, or doorstep. One advantage of container gardening is freedom from soil-borne diseases, insect grubs, and poor soil, all of which threaten plants in a traditional garden. When given the proper care, a container garden can be every bit as productive and enjoyable as a traditional one.

A wide variety of containers can be used, including hanging baskets, clay or plastic pots, barrels, buckets, and trash cans. Even drain pipes and cement blocks have been used to grow vegetables. As for container size, there are no hard and fast rules to follow. A general guide is to use small containers for lettuce, spinach, peppers, radishes, green onions, broccoli, and dwarf tomatoes. Use medium containers for eggplants and for larger crops of any of the vegetables listed above. Use large containers for cabbage, cucumbers, squash, potatoes, greens, and tomatoes.

There are three important considerations when choosing containers, they must:

- be large enough to support fully grown plants,
- have good drainage,
- never have held products that are toxic to plants or people.

Always be sure there are plenty of drainage holes. Containers that drain poorly can mean the failure of a container garden. It is a good idea to raise containers off the ground to allow excess water to drain and to improve air flow. Potting soil appropriate for containers can be purchased at local garden centers. Regular garden soil does not drain well in containers and should not be used.

Watering is very important. Containers dry out quickly, especially in full sun and wind. Soil should be checked for moisture at least once a day and, in hot, dry weather, twice a day.

Planning for a Small Garden

You don't need a large area to have a vegetable garden, but you do need good soil, plenty of sunshine, a water source, and probably a fence. If you think deer love your hostas, the entire woodland community is going to enjoy your vegetable garden. If you plant it, they will come.

I've recently been planning my own small vegetable garden and have been developing a list of things to keep in mind as I go about my planning. Some of these items are common sense, but some of them didn't occur to me until I started really thinking about my design. I'm finding the trick with a small garden is to find a balance of the following items:

- The first rule is to be realistic about what you are putting in your space. It may be unrealistic to think that you can fit a large seating area, a vegetable garden, an herb garden, a rose garden, five peony plants, and a water feature, all in a 200 square foot

plot. The first step of planning should be to prioritize what things you desire most and then work the spacing of the plants within your plot size.

- Site selection is the most important factor. Try to select a site which has at least six hours of sunshine each day. Vegetables grown in shady locations usually have poorer quality and lower yields. A space along a garage or house can be useful, and rental plots in community gardens often are available. Garden sites which have had a turf cover or have been fallow (grown in weeds) for several years should be turned and tilled the fall preceding planting to reduce spring weed growth.
- Soil is very important in vegetable production. Vegetable plants grow best in fertile, well-drained soil having a loamy texture. Unfortunately, many gardens don't contain such soils. Very sandy soils dry out rapidly, and it's difficult to maintain appropriate fertility levels in them. Heavy clay soils are hard to work, and they remain wet until spring. After heavy rains, they form a hard, compacted crust, which deprives the plant's root system of essential oxygen. These soils must be modified to produce vegetables. Most vegetables will not tolerate wet feet, and root rot can develop if roots are saturated. Soil texture and structure can be enhanced by using soil conditioners, which improve soil aeration, drainage, workability, and moisture-holding capacity. Compost, peat moss, animal manures, cover crops, and perlite are common soil conditioners.

Gardening in a small place has its limits, but it doesn't have to be confining. In a small garden, the gardener can pay attention to detail. You can keep on top of maintenance, while still having time to sit and enjoy your small garden. In fact, many small-space gardens are designed around entertaining and sitting areas, the places that make being at home enjoyable. So do yourself, and perhaps your neighbors, a favor by planting a summer vegetable garden and feast on the fruits of your labor.

There is nothing like slicing into a juicy, home-grown Cherokee Purple tomato, combined with freshly picked gourmet cucumbers, garlic chives, and onion to create an attractive and delicious salad. You can wow your friends and family this Fourth of July with homemade Yukon Gold potato salad.

You can see there is no reason to have sixty acres and two tractors for small plot gardening, so get your plants and plots ready for this year's show-stopper.

MILLIE RELAXES ON HER FAVORITE SHELF IN THE GREENHOUSE.

The Mysteries of Mistletoe

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The European mistletoe, *Viscum album* is a plant so steeped in history that it tells a tale at every turn. The Druids especially held the plant in high esteem. Though our mistletoe is common in oaks, the European mistletoe of lore was usually found in apple trees. Mistletoe found in oak trees was highly prized as both were considered sacred and used in rituals. In his 1922 study on mythology, *The Golden Bough*, Sir James George Frazer quotes Pliny as saying, "The Druids … esteem nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree in which it grows, provided only that the tree is an oak."

The Druids gathered mistletoe by climbing the tree and cutting the plant out with a golden sickle, catching it before it touched the earth in a white cloth. Being neither of the ground nor of the sky, mistletoe was considered a heal-all, aphrodisiac, and protector from evil forces.

Mistletoe was believed to be born of lightning and able to extinguish fire. It was thought to be

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Gardening Myths

by **Preston Stockton**, *RGWFU manager*

Many years ago, when I was a horticultural intern at Monticello, I was helping one of the full-time gardeners plant potatoes. Our supervisor watched us for a bit and then told us that he wanted it done differently. After he left, Pops, the seventy-two year old gardener whom I was assisting, continued to plant just as he had before. When I questioned him about it, his comment was, "For every gardener, there is a different way to garden."

I often think of Pops when I see different gardening techniques. If I have learned anything about gardening, I have learned that you can't argue with success. Once, when visiting the home of my college roommate, her father asked me about rooting cuttings from an azalea in their garden. We went out in the yard, and I showed him how to do it. I also suggested that he might have better success that time of year if he used a rooting hormone, saying that it looked a lot like powdered sugar. On my next trip, several months later, we had barely stopped in the driveway before he ran out and guided me into the garden. He bent down and pulled out several pots that were in the shade behind some shrubs. Lo and behold, there were about a hundred rooted azalea cuttings. He was so excited and wanted me to help him pot them up, which I did. When I told him what a great job he had done, he said that he had just done what I showed him—clipped off some short pieces, stripped the lower leaves, dipped them into powdered sugar, and stuck them in the soil. Wait a minute. Did he say powdered sugar? No, I never told him otherwise. If it works, it works. At least he had plenty of plants to share with his neighbors.

We all have our tricks and superstitions when it comes to growing. I know that many gardeners say that it is bad luck to thank them whenever they give someone a "slip" from their garden. It will certainly doom the poor plant to an unseemly death. Other people swear by planting by the moon or the *Farmer's Almanac*. We all learn things from our parents, grandparents, friends, or neighbors. I always find what I call the urban legends of gardening interesting. These are misconceptions that have no horticultural basis but never seem to die. After many years of working here at Reynolda, these are the three gardening myths I hear the most.

Ants on Peonies

Anyone who has ever grown peonies knows that, when the buds get to a certain point before opening, they are covered with ants. As a child, I spent many an hour sitting in the yard watching the ants scurry over my mother's peonies. I am amazed at how many people comment on the ants on the peonies at Reynolda. It is like they have a cult following. Some people think that the ants' activity is required for the buds to open. Others believe that the ants harm the buds and should be sprayed and killed. Neither view is correct. The truth is that peony flower buds are covered with small extra-floral nectaries. These are special glands that produce a sugary liquid along the outside edges of the sepals that cover the developing buds. This sweet substance is a high-quality, high-energy food for the ants, and they will stay until the food is gone. But their feeding does not determine whether the buds open or not. Nor do they harm the buds. It does appear, however, that while they are present, they drive off other insects that may attempt to munch on the buds. So, it seems that both plant and insect benefit.

THESE PEONY BLOSSOMS OPENED WITHOUT THE HELP OF ANTS.

Watering during the day is not harmful to plants. Here, a mist produced by the irrigation cools the July garden.

Watering on a Sunny Day Will Burn Plants

We often water the gardens at Reynolda in the middle of the day when the sun is shining. This is especially true early in the season before plants have a chance to become established. But, I can't tell you how many people ask if this doesn't burn the leaves. They have been told for years that the water droplets magnify the sun's rays, much like a magnifying glass. I think that this myth comes from areas in the country that have water that is high in soluble salts. As the water dries, the salts left behind can burn the leaves. This is not the case in this area. I never fool with Mother Nature, and if she wants to stir up a mid-day shower, then I think she knows best. Current research shows that watering during the heat of the day is actually good for plants because it reduces stress resulting from transpiration (water loss through the leaves). It is a fact that watering in the middle of the day is a less efficient use of water due to evaporation. But when your garden is looking very sad on those brutally hot days, do not hesitate to water.

Pine Needles or Oak Leaves Lower pH

We all know that the pH of our soil has a large impact on how well our plants grow. Since garden mulch could influence pH as it decomposes, it is understandable that gardeners would be concerned on how it impacts soil pH. Pine needles and oak leaves are a natural choice for mulch in this area since they are so readily available.

Basically, the pH of our native soil is determined by the degradation of the various types of base rock that are present. If the base rock is acidic, as it is in our area, then the soil will be acidic. For years, it was thought that pine needles and oak leaves that are used as mulch lowered soil pH. But most research today shows that garden mulch has little effect on soil pH. Oak leaves and pine needles may be slightly acidic when fresh, but experts now say that they become more and more alkaline as they decompose, resulting in a compost that is usually neutral. Any effect that they would have on soil pH is negligible, if at all. If you are adding non-composted oak leaves as a soil amendment, then I would do a soil test to determine pH and lime as needed.

Gardeners have plenty of things to worry about from season to season. Hopefully by de-bunking these three myths, it will give you just a bit of peace of mind and the time to enjoy the garden.

Bales of pines needles ready to spread on the gardens. No, they won't lower the pH of the soil.

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The Early Landscape of Reynolda Chapel, Cottages, and Park

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

When this all-too-brief story begins, Reynolds Farms totals about 700 acres. Roadways have been graded, electrical and water systems are under construction, and plans are being drawn for buildings. Pastures and productive fields are beginning to rise in the place of worn-out farmland. A newly built lake is nearly full, and the greenhouse is almost finished. Sugar maple trees and a privet hedge line the Elkin highway where it passes through the future estate. Travelers can stop at the village entrance for a drink of water at a stone fountain; their horses can drink at a trough below.

Within a few years, a lovely white chapel will be situated on a quiet knoll overlooking a grassy park across from the village entrance. There will be picturesque cottages on either side, one of which is already under construction, and all will be landscaped with gardens, ornamental hedges, and stately trees.

When Mrs. Reynolds dreamed of the elements she wanted in her country estate, did she envision this peaceful scene? It is difficult to know, but by following a timeline through architectural and landscape plans, photographs, accounting records, a newspaper account, and letters, we can at least gain some insight into what she may have been thinking as she created Reynolda and nurtured it through the remaining years of her life.

1913

On January 2, Mrs. Reynolds is busy meeting and corresponding with engineers, suppliers, and designers. Every detail is important. Her attention is focused on a small area on the west side of the highway. She writes her chief landscape engineer, Louis Miller, in New Jersey.

> My dear Mr. Miller:
> …Whenever you come down be sure to call to see me, as I would like to advise with you with regard to the best place for locating our small farm houses, namely: cottage for poultryman, dairyman, gardener, etc. I had an idea that they might be well placed if along the side of the hill on the other side of the highway, opposite greenhouses, gardener's cottage and present farm buildings. The property on this side as you, perhaps, remember, slopes down from the road to a little brook, with the hill rising beyond. My idea was to run a road along the side of this hill beyond this brook, some three or four hundred feet from the present macadamized road, communicating with this road at both ends, building the houses a little back from this road on the far side, leaving a space in between for a small natural park. The houses would be easily accessible to our water plan and sewerage system.
>
> With best wishes for the New Year, I am
> Very truly yours,

Two days later, the first meeting of a First Presbyterian Church Sunday School Mission is held at the Wachovia Arbor School, near the present corner of Reynolda and Arbor Roads, with sixty-three in attendance. This group has formed, at Mrs. Reynolds' suggestion, to explore the idea of starting a new church in the area.

1914

With over a hundred members on the role, a minister is called to be in charge of the group, which is still under the auspices of First Presbyterian Church. The group is ready for a permanent home. Charles Barton Keen, the architect for the family home and other buildings at Reynolda, draws up plans for a chapel.

Reynolds Farms is legally renamed Reynolda on October 1, 1914. The chapel is listed in the inventory of liabilities and assets.

1915

By this time, Thomas Sears has assumed responsibility for all of the gardens and landscapes at Reynolda. In September he creates plans for the area that will include the chapel, the cottages nearby, and the borders of the lane. Like all of his later plans, these are highly detailed and contain many plants that are highly unusual for that time. This year, his photographs of churches appear in the book *Parish Churches of England*.

Mrs. Reynolds deeds the chapel to the Southern Presbyterian Church in November. She is clearly pleased with the outcome of the project. The deed states, "That neither the building nor grounds are to be changed in any respect from their style of architecture or plan of landscape work, that any enlargement of the building or improvement of the grounds shall conform to the present style of architecture or landscape work."

1916

The farms are fully operational, with 350 acres under cultivation, including pastures, vineyards, and orchards, as well as fields of grains and vegetables. The superintendent A. Clinton Wharton, a graduate of North Carolina A. and M. College, has given careful attention to improving the soils throughout, using the latest information on scientific agriculture, including soil testing, organic amendments, and crop rotation.

Mrs. Reynolds has recently deeded the outdoor auditorium to the Church when she writes to Sunday School superintend-

ent Mr. J. S. Kuykendall in July. She is explaining a bill that was mistakenly sent to the church instead of to her, saying that it was "…for the turning under of the weedy side on either side of the church, and putting same in peas, giving it a liberal amount of manure, fertilizer, etc…as I desire that all church property should be placed in good condition before it is ever turned over to the congregation, or if not, that it shall be put in good condition as soon as the season will justify." She goes on to say that she intends to deed the property adjacent to the chapel but not until she has improved the land around it and built a manse.

1917

Those who do not know Mrs. Reynolds might observe that a church is just another piece of the vision of a perfect English-style village emerging from the rusty Piedmont soil, like the herds of sheep and cattle, the magnificent dairy barn, and the exquisite gardens. But, by all accounts, Mrs. Reynolds is tireless in sharing her love of the Presbyterian Church with others, not only in the two churches here but in others throughout the region. She contributes money and furnishings, supports missionaries, and teaches Sunday School. Her dedication is perhaps most poignantly expressed in a telegram sent to Dr. and Mrs. Neal Anderson at Montreat, N.C., on July 8. She says, "I wanted you to know that my happiness is complete. Mr. Reynolds joined the church this morning."

Later in the month, an article about Reynolda appears in the *Twin-City Sentinel*. It includes this account:

> "A drive to the west of the city on the Bethania road, over two miles of bituminous pavements connecting with about a mile and a half of concrete road—which, by the way, is the first concrete highway built in the state—takes you into the Reynolda estate by an inviting open approach. At the main entrance, a beautiful scene is presented in the group of community buildings on either side of the road. To the left nestling in an open lawn is the handsome Reynolda chapel and the Presbyterian manse* adjoining; also the residence of the superintendent and mechanic on the estate, Mr. R. L. Gibson. The beautiful chapel forms a center for the people of the entire community as well as for the Reynolda village. The background of this attractive cove is formed by woodlands broken only by a beautiful orchard and garden plots."

In the fall, the Reynolds' home is finished and ready for the family to move in.

1918

Progress on buildings and grounds is progressing at breakneck speed, even as Mr. Reynolds' health is declining. The formal gardens near the greenhouse are planted in the spring.

The wedding of Senah Critz and Charles Kent is about to begin in the outdoor auditorium, 1918.

The wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds' niece, Senah Critz, and Charles Kent is held in the outdoor auditorium in June. Mrs. Reynolds has offered to take charge of the decorations, but, hoping to reduce any burden on her aunt during a difficult period, Senah writes, "I do not think we will need much. The cedars and evergreens are beautiful now and they make lovely decorations…." She is planning to have a florist prepare "…baskets filled with pink roses, ragged robins, snapdragons, and garden flowers…" and asks to let her know if her aunt "…can suggest any other kind of flowers that would match up with what (she is) growing." She is planning to seat 500 guests in the outdoor auditorium. The bridal party will face the "…altar with the back of the church as the background (just as we have services, you know.)"

Mr. Reynolds dies on July 29.

Throughout the years of widowhood and her marriage to J. Edward Johnston, Katharine continued to watch over the church and its neighborhood. The manse, constructed in 1920, was first occupied not by the minister, who was settled elsewhere, but by the teachers at Reynolda School, who moved in on January 16, 1921. In March of 1921, Thomas Sears drew a plan for the manse garden. Of all of the gardens he designed for Reynolda, this was one of the most complex. It was filled with flowering shrubs, groundcovers, vines, and a multitude of perennials.

Katharine Smith Reynolds Johnston died on May 23, 1924, leaving many projects unfinished. In 1927, the Katharine Johnston Memorial Building and a memorial park were erected on the west side of the outdoor auditorium, funded by Mr. Johnston.

**This is confusing because the manse was not constructed until 1920. The writer may have believed that one of the other cottages was the manse.*

The Panoramic View

The panoramic view, part of a series of scenes captured around the nascent estate by an unknown photographer, was taken about 1916. It will be difficult for you to see the details of the plantings, but I will describe them to you, as I have seen them on the original photograph and compared them to the original plan.

Begin on the south end (to your left). A circle at the end of the lane separates it from the farm. The first house, the home of farm superintendent A. Clinton Wharton, was known as the Superintendent's Cottage. The front yard is filled with flowers, including three types of phlox, hollyhocks, lilies, candytuft, daisies, pinks, and several types each of irises, peonies, and tulips. Ivy covers one of the front walls. Climbing roses grow at each corner. A saucer magnolia tree is in the center of the yard. A hedge of deutzia, spirea, red-flowering dogwood, and abelia lines the driveway on the north side of the house.

On the other side of the driveway, another hedge contains some of the same shrubs, but there are subtle changes, as we have come to expect of Sears plantings. He adds beauty berry to the hedge mixture and features a crape myrtle in the lawn nearby.

The second house, known as the Electrician's Cottage, was the home of the electrician Robert Gibson. It is also surrounded by herbaceous plants, including irises, larkspur, phlox, tulips, and daisies. There are climbing roses and several ornamental vines—Carolina jasmine, climbing roses, polygonum, and deciduous bittersweet—on the walls and the latticework at the front door and enclosing the backyard. It is surrounded by shrubs, including lilacs, boxwood, cotoneaster, tea roses, and sweet-breath-of-spring.

A spacious lawn flanks the chapel. Almost all of the plants in the chapel landscape are evergreens. Stately trees, including deodar cedar and southern magnolia, frame the building; low-growing shrubs, including mountain andromeda, fetterbush, prostrate yew and juniper, English laurel, and Oregon grape, help define the walkways around the building; vines, including evergreen bittersweet and English ivy, cover the side walls, and mountain clematis climbs on the six columns. The outdoor auditorium, which is directly behind the chapel and can be glimpsed in the photograph, is one of the most unusual plantings on the estate. The Sears drawing shows a design in the shape of a keyhole, with walkways in the center and two stairways at the sides. A hedgelike planting of 166 Monterrey cypress trees surrounds it. A dozen European lindens are just outside the hedge. An orchard is on the hill behind the chapel, with woods beyond.

The next cottage is something of a mystery. Unlike the others, it is simply landscaped, with ivy on the walls and a few flowering shrubs. There are only a few flowers, including hollyhocks, daylilies, and phlox.

Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plantings line the road and stream banks and extend into the grass lawn of the park at the curves and bridge. Several maple trees are planted along the lane, at the cottages, and in the park.

Through the magic of panoramic photography, we are able to see Reynolda Road (known at that time as the Elkin or Bethania highway) on the lower left corner, with maple trees near the road and the privet hedge beside them.

— Camilla Wilcox

Correction: J. Edward Johnston was a native of Florence, S.C., not Baltimore, Md., as stated in the last issue.

A note to the reader. . .

I often wish, when I sit down to research and write the history articles for *The Gardener's Journal*, that you could be here beside me. Together, we would take out our magnifying glasses and pore over the old photographs and original plans. We would zoom-in on digital images on my computer to see every detail. I could point out to you, for instance, where a tree that appears on a plan was taken down last summer; where a tangle of flowering shrubs used to grow beside a driveway; where phlox has been replanted in the same spot where it grew almost a hundred years ago, once again confounding gardeners with summer mildew. Looking at a photograph, you might notice an arbor that is no longer there, or a mysterious structure in the background. You would find unfamiliar names in the plant lists and be delighted to learn that the plants themselves are familiar to you; only their names have changed, like an object lost for a moment then quickly found.

We would look at the same photographs and interpret them differently, lending credence to those often-quoted words, "We see things not as *they* are but as *we* are." In the course of our conversation, we would both come to understand Reynolda better, and, like all good historians, we would come to understand each other and ourselves better, too.

As for me, when I'm researching an article, I often think about how Reynolda must have seemed to those who lived nearby. Around 1915, when the church and cottages discussed in this issue were built, my own parents were small children, growing up in the North Carolina foothills. Like most inhabitants of the region, they lived as their parents and grandparents had. My mother lived in the log house her ancestors built when they arrived from a region that is now within the borders of Austria but was, when they left, a part of Germany. My father lived in a frame house high above the bend of a river, within a family and community still very much aware of their own French heritage, although they had been established in America for two hundred years by then. Each family maintained gardens and orchards and cultivated fields. There were books and magazines on shelves and tables; the children were expected to go to college and to contribute to their communities when they finished. Thus, there were a few similarities between my forebears and the Reynolds family, but they were only the common threads of the rural South at that time—folks knew where their "people" came from; they depended on the land for sustenance; they believed in the power of education. But the contrast between my family's world and that of Reynolda was vast.

My grandmother, Pansy Bumgarner, holds my mother, Olive, the first of her eight children, 1911.

If you're a native of the region, your own heritage may be similar to mine. Look at some old family photographs and think back on family stories, and you'll see what I mean. Your family history would be on your mind during our time together. The photographs of Reynolda that we would look at show ornamental gardens, rather than the big, country gardens where my grandparents—and perhaps yours—grew enough food for themselves, legions of children, and various elderly relatives. Gardens in these photographs are behind painstakingly clipped, ornamental hedges instead of simple board fences, hastily built to keep out roaming livestock. There are shining, white, stucco cottages, not the logs and clapboards of the houses where my parents and most of the region's citizens lived at that time. We would see a quaint, vine-covered English-style chapel in a park, rather than the drafty wooden church by the side of a country road, with a graveyard beside it, where my grandparents are buried.

We've been told that people came to Reynolda from miles around to see the farms and gardens and to learn new ways of doing things. Were my grandparents among them, and if they were, what did they think of them? How about yours?

As we walk through Reynolda today, we see charmingly clustered buildings, beautiful gardens, and established landscapes. We might notice intriguing remains of the early years—a half-hidden terrace, a section of privet hedge, a crow-foot fence, an unusual tree—, and still not think about what it was like to walk these same paths and roads when they were new.

By the end of a day with the old plans and photographs, though, you might want, as I often do, to go back in time. To see Reynolda through the eyes of ordinary people, like our grandparents, who lived nearby during Reynolda's golden hour—to see the magnificent formal gardens and the tiny dooryard gardens at the cottages, the climbing roses on every pillar and post. Would Reynolda take our breath away? It often does now; just imagine then. You, too, would want, just for a little while, to hold on to what was and what might have been.

— Camilla Wilcox

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The Mysteries of Mistletoe

Continued from page 5

the soul of the oak. The Druid association with mistletoe and the winter solstice probably gave rise to the present-day use of the plant at Christmas time. Frazer also notes that Japanese and African cultures venerate the plant as a panacea.

Mistletoe played a role in the death of the Norse god Balder. The son of Frigga and Odin, Balder was the god of peace, light, purity, and innocence. The supreme goddess Frigga bound all things by oath never to harm Balder, but she overlooked mistletoe. Loki, the trickster of Norse mythology, armed his blind brother with an arrow of mistletoe, and that was the end of Balder. Not for long, though. At the request of the gods and goddesses, Balder was restored to life, and mistletoe was thereafter given to the care of Freya, the goddess of love. Thereafter, those who passed beneath the mistletoe would receive a kiss, to show that it had become an emblem of love and not hate. In Scandinavia mistletoe was used to restore peace among enemies, and, under it, marital discord was resolved with a kiss.

The National Cancer Institute claims that extracts of mistletoe have been shown to kill cancer cells in laboratory tests and to boost the immune system. Mistletoe extracts have been classed as biological response modifiers, substances that stimulate the body's response to infections and disease. Mistletoe may support the immune system by increasing the number and activity of white blood cells. Animal studies show some indication that the extracts reduce the side effects of standard anticancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation.

Although evidence suggests that mistletoe extracts boost the immune system, it does not indicate the enhanced immunity helps the body fight cancer cells. Side effects are also an issue. They range from soreness and headache to severe reactions, such as anaphylactic shock. The effects of ingesting mistletoe plants or berries are well known, and it is listed among plants known to have poisoned horses, resulting in seizures, abnormal blood pressure, slowing of the heart rate, vomiting, and death.

The *Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening* notes that "an enterprising homesteader or farmer can make extra income by seeding an old orchard" with mistletoe. They recommend scraping the bark of a young twig and applying several of the sticky berries to the undersides. It takes about a year for the first leaves to appear, but afterwards growth is rapid.

The next time you find yourself and your loved one entwined beneath the mistletoe, you must remember this: A kiss is just a kiss, but it has traveled on the wings of birds and through a labyrinth of history and mythology to reach your lips.

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