

2/242

YEAR BOOK  
OF THE  
HEATHER  
SOCIETY



1963

# THE HEATHER SOCIETY



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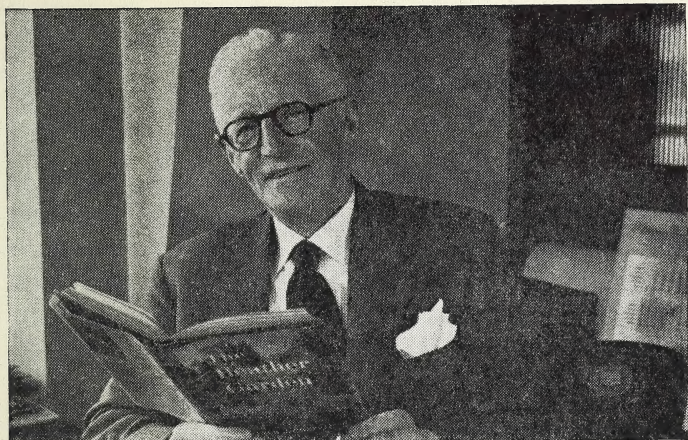
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#### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**T**HIS Year Book is something more than another publication in gardening literature. It is the first of its kind on the subject of heaths; it represents the official organ of a Society in its very early stages; its pages are for the benefit of those who find satisfaction and enjoyment in growing heathers; it invites members and non-members to contribute to its columns. The Society stands for what is best in the world of gardening and welcomes all.

I feel confident that the Year Book will achieve three objects. First, to report comprehensively on the Society's activities, to provide increased knowledge on heath culture, and to enable its members to write of their experience in growing heathers for the benefit of readers. Second, it will help others to make a start in planting and so arouse keenness. (I myself began 35 years ago with half-a-dozen *carneas* and *King George* was my first love for these beautiful winter flowering heaths.) Third, it will be the means of obtaining new members.

To one who for more than half a lifetime has enjoyed each moment in the heather garden it seems like a natural sequence—a stage further—to wish this Year Book well. I trust it will continue to be published for many years that lie ahead and it is but a passing pleasant thought to imagine those who come after us in the proud possession of this, our first number.

FRED J. CHAPPLE

## *The Aims and Objects of the Heather Society*

IN February 1963, despite the dreadful weather then prevailing, about fifty people—including our President who had journeyed from the Isle of Man—met in a room kindly provided by the R.H.S. at Vincent Square, and it was unanimously agreed that a National Heather Society could, over the years to come, do much to stimulate interest in these attractive plants.

These enthusiasts, who were the founders of the Society, believe that despite the growing interest now being shown in heathers, there are thousands who do not yet realise what a rewarding addition they can be to a garden.

It is therefore hoped that the Heather Society can make a valuable contribution in the following ways:—

(1) To stimulate interest by local meetings; visits to famous heather gardens such as Wisley and Windsor Great Park, as well as private gardens. (2) To provide a source of information and cultural assistance. (3) To arrange displays and competitions at R.H.S. and local shows. (4) To form a collection of colour slides of different varieties and of heather gardens to loan to lecturers. (5) To cooperate with “the Trade” so that the market in *Ericas* may continue to expand.



If you have picked a way between the tall heaths, followed a path through the smaller ones, and, with me, stooped to examine even the tiniest, I thank you for your companionship. If, on the other hand (and in this case you will not be reading this), though you started out with a brave heart you found a tramp through nothing but heather so monotonous and tiring that you have fallen out by the wayside, then I must ask your forgiveness, as I have mishandled the theme. The subject is not to blame; there is no better in the world.

D. FFYE MAXWELL



## *Editorial*

I MUST begin by paying tribute to those who began this Society, and guided and guarded its first stumbling steps up to this present, when it appears it should soon be able to walk by itself.

I refer especially of course, to Sir John Charrington who began it all by his letter in an R.H.S. Journal, then called the first meeting on a snowy afternoon in February of this year, and since then by his drive, initiative and generosity has done so much to foster and maintain the ideas and ideals he wrote in the first circular of the Society, which is reprinted on page 3. His enthusiasm for all members of the heather family is quite infectious!

It was Sir John too who 'found' Colonel and Mrs. MacLeod. Since working with her, Mrs. MacLeod has had my constant admiration for her efficiency and energy, and I know Committee members will agree with me when I say it is mostly Mrs. MacLeod who keeps the wheels running smoothly.

We are fortunate to have Mr. Fred Chapple as President. His book 'The Heather Garden' has become a Bible and constant companion to so many heather enthusiasts; his knowledge on anything connected with heaths is encyclopaedic, and we are glad indeed to have his experience and support.

I wish to thank our contributors, all of whom agreed so readily to write for this number. It need hardly be said it will always be the aim of this publication to encourage the growing of heathers, and in these pages we have dealt with some of the difficulties some of us find, especially in the soil we have to cope with. We have already had a number of questions sent in telling of problems that beset some of our members; we welcome any questions and shall do our best to answer them, though these may sometimes be long in coming.

It is a constant source of pleasure to meet other heather enthusiasts, amateur and professional; there appear to be increasing numbers of those who can echo the words of the Duke of Bedford, whom Dr. Ronald Gray quotes in his article, who wrote in 1825 "I am abundantly grateful to that Providence which in its universal dispensation has permitted me to indulge in a pursuit at once so pleasing and so rational."



## REPORT OF THE FIRST GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the First General Meeting of the Society held on Wednesday September 25th, 1963, in the Lecture Room of the Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Square, S.W.1 at 2.30 p.m..

**PRESENT.** The President, Mr. Fred J. Chapple; the Chairman, Sir John Charrington; Secretary, Mrs. MacLeod; Minuting Secretary, Miss Kellam-Smith; Treasurer, Col. D. MacLeod, together with over 40 members.

**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN.** Col. Russell moved that Sir John Charrington occupy the Chair—this was carried unanimously and the Chairman then welcomed everyone present.

**APOLOGIES.** The Secretary reported having received letters of apology from 15 members.

### THE SECRETARY'S REPORT

Sir John, ladies and gentlemen,

As many of you will know, it was in the August volume of the R.H.S. Journal last year that there appeared Sir John Charrington's letter, urging the desirability of forming a Heather Society, and asking those interested to write to him. The response was immediate and from then on letters and circulars were sent out in great numbers. I myself did not come on the scene until October, so the credit for all the preliminary work must go to Sir John and his personal Secretary, Miss Berris. Mr. Fred J. Chapple whom Sir John had contacted very early gave as his opinion that 50 enthusiastic supporters formed a sufficient basis to go ahead on, and so it came to pass that despite



snow-drifts and winter despair, the inaugural meeting was held in the R.H.S. Lecture room, kindly put at our disposal free of charge, on February 20th, 1963. The decision was taken to form the Heather Society, and ten volunteers with Sir John as Chairman, became the formative committee. Mr. Chapple, who was present, became the first President.

On March 8th the first committee meeting was held and the Society began to take shape. We had from the first the valuable help on the committee of Mr. F. J. Stevens of Maxwell and Beale and Mr. John Letts of Windlesham, Our other most prominent member on the committee is Mr. P. S. Patrick, with his wealth of knowledge at our disposal. It is to him that the Year Book has been entrusted; this will be published towards the end of the present year.

We have as members many who have made a name for themselves in the Heather world, and we were honoured when Dr. Ronald Gray, Mr. B. C. Westall and the Earl of Feversham accepted Vice-presidency. It was with the very greatest regret that we learnt that Lord Feversham had died early in September.

From the beginning we have had the most cordial relations with the Press, both local and national, while the gardening periodicals, *Gardeners' Chronicle* and *Amateur Gardening* have kept our name before the public. As a direct result of an article in *The Sunday Times* by Mr. Lanning Roper, fifteen new members joined within a fortnight. For all this publicity we record our grateful thanks.

As you will have inferred, up till this first General Meeting, the formative committee has been consolidating the position of the Heather Society by attracting new members, but beyond a visit to Windlesham and Wisley, its real work has hardly begun. What seems essential is the delegation of responsibility to sub-branches, and it is most pleasing to report that the first two offers have come from Miss Joyce Burfitt of Poole, Dorset and Mr. A. W. Smith of Antrim, Northern Ireland to set up branches of which they will be the Secretaries. Another offer of help in increasing the membership has come from Mrs. Whitson of Menstrie, Clackmannanshire, as the Scottish membership is very small. We look to these two branches and to the others that we are confident will be set up to stimulate local interest in every way possible and to correlate their activities with the London centre.

In 1964 we plan to begin our first bi-annual Shows to fit in with the appropriate Spring and late summer Fortnightly Shows of the R.H.S. A Show Committee is to be set up immediately, not necessarily confined to the ordinary committee members for we shall welcome the help of any who have had experience of shows and judging.

We have received a number of colour transparencies and the promise of more, and in addition, several owners of lovely heather gardens have extended invitations for the Society to visit them. This we look forward to arranging in the near future.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. MacLeod for the fostering of the very friendly atmosphere among all members. He also thanked Miss



Cording for the floral arrangement of Heathers which she had brought to the Meeting and stressed the possibilities of Heathers in floral decoration.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT.** The Treasurer reported that subscriptions were steadily coming in. Mr. Chelmick of Horley had been approached with a view to auditing the books for presentation at the end of the financial year.

**APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL.** The Chairman explained that all the business of the Society had so far been carried out by the Committee of 10 members and the question of appointing a Council as well as a Committee was in his opinion superfluous. By unanimous vote the idea of a Council was discontinued.

Two nominations for Committee had been received, and these were elected, as were the original ten members. New members: Mr. A. Paterson and Mr. H. L. Nicholson.

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.** The Chairman introduced the President, Mr. Fred J. Chapple, who expressed his great pleasure at being able to be present and conveyed his good wishes to the Society. He thanked the Secretary for keeping him in touch with its activities. He wished to place on record the Society's gratitude to the R.H.S. for the free use of the lecture room at the inaugural meeting. He suggested that the Society could arrange coach tours for members to visit gardens in Scotland and even Ireland.

The Address was received with warm acclamation.

There followed a short break during which members talked together and looked at the photographs taken the previous week at Wisley. Members booked orders for them and may continue to do so.

**THE TALK BY MR. L. W. SMITH** illustrated by coloured slides of Heaths and Heather Gardens, among them his own previous garden in Hornchurch, was obviously greatly enjoyed by all. Thanks to Mr. Smith were proposed by the Chairman and the members showed their appreciation by the warmth of their applause.



#### FORWARD NOTICES—1964

**MARCH 10th and 11th.** Heather Society Competitions at R.H.S. Show.

**MARCH 25th.** Heather Society Annual General Meeting at the R.H.S. Hall, Vincent Square, S.W.1 **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE THEN DUE.**

## *Heathers in the winter of 1962-1963*

*Sir John Charrington, Crockham Hill, Kent*

MY garden stands 650 feet above sea level; is very exposed, and was subjected to as much snow and severe frosts as any part of the country, starting with at least 12 inches of snow on New Year's Eve.

For about 7 weeks my heathers were completely hidden, but towards the end of February when the snow began to evaporate—we had no really wet thaw—a number began to show their heads, and my delight may be imagined when several *darleyensis* and *George Rendall*, which had only been planted in the preceding autumn, actually showed pink flowers through the carpet of white.

I am not conscious of having lost a single plant—in a collection of between 2/3,000—from frost; but quite a number of the taller varieties such as *mediterranea*, *superba med. alba* and *Stoborough* had branches snapped by the weight of snow.

This experience has confirmed my enthusiasm for heathers more strongly than ever, for I had not thought it possible for so many plants to survive so exceptional a winter so triumphantly.

I should explain that about half my collection has been planted within the last two years, and all within four years.

The flowering for the early varieties was, of course, delayed, and I think I must admit that the display, when it arrived, was not quite so good as one would normally expect; but I can conclude by saying that they all look now—August 1963—as if last winter had done them good.



*F. J. Chapple, Port Erin, Isle of Man*

THE severity of last winter over most parts of the British Isles did not reach to the Isle of Man. There was more snow and frost and cold winds than usual, especially heavy falls of snow in the north of the Island. The south (where I live) escaped the onslaught of a blizzard which swept over Douglas; snow fell only for three days, an east wind was persistent and unpleasantly long, and about 15 degrees of frost were recorded which is high for a small town overlooking the Irish Sea. On the other hand, bright intervals relieved the tension of winter. From mid-December to mid-March many days had plentiful hours of warm sunshine, with clear skies, the sea translucent to its bed, and the bay of Port Erin as sub-tropical though not as warm as the Mediterranean shore.

The real enemy here is always wind, in a succession of gales bringing with it lashings of salt spray which is injurious to *Calluna, cinerea*, and *Tetralix*. Rarely is a plant lost provided reasonable precautions are taken for shelter. The *carneas* and *hyb. darleyensis*, are never damaged by salt in the wind; one could safely plant up to a thousand on a hillside overlooking the sea. Other species affected get off to a late start because the burned tips are temporarily retarded in developing and not until they are green again does the plant resume normal growth. The check means that new growth and flowers appear later than in England and this applies particularly to *Callunas*. On the other hand, the hybrid *darleyensis* flowered from the first week in December until early in April. The *carneas* followed later in December.

From private gardens and nurseries come reports that heathers came through last winter with flying colours. It is sixteen years ago since there was so much snow and frost in a

ten-acre garden north of the Island. Weight of snow broke a few branches of the Tree Heaths but damage done was superficial. All the plants there are thriving as though there had been no winter.

*F. J. Stevens, Maxwell & Beale Ltd.,  
Broadstone, Dorset*

Nothing could have been more desolate and dispiriting than the sight of Naked Cross Nursery during those icy months at the start of '63. Snow there was in plenty, but it was not allowed to rest as the biting winds came and sent it on its way leaving the heathers and shrubs, large and small, at its mercy. So the black corner of Dorset lived up to its name to the full, and as I struggled sometimes among the plants my feelings were that casualties would be heavy. But after the thaw and the ensuing weeks, one tried to take stock and saw at once that the dwarf heathers, including the supposed tender *Calluna vulgaris elegantissima* had weathered the storm and were happily alive, cut back it is true but certainly alive and to recover during the summer; all the other dwarf heathers survived without much trouble, but the *Daboecias* looked sick being cut to the ground and some did not recover. Others to suffer were the Tree Heaths which were harmed more through the winds than the snow, notably *lusitanica Veitchii*, which was badly hit, on the other hand *arborea alpina* was untouched, a wonderful hardy species.

*J. H. Brummage, Taverham, Norwich*

We here in Norfolk suffered rather extensive damage during last January and February, having practically no snow. All Tree Heaths (except *arborea alpina* and one mature *australis* of several dozens, 5 feet high), many



hundreds of immature plants and rooted cuttings in cold frames were killed.

*Leslie S. Slinger, Slieve Donard Nursery, Co. Ltd.,  
Newcastle, Co. Down, N. Ireland*

Heathers were entirely unaffected here in this nursery; indeed, generally speaking we have to make the odd report that the winter of 1962 was much more severe than the winter of 1963. We can say that in spite of huge losses in other nursery stock, our heathers were entirely untouched.



### *The case for Hardy Heathers in the garden*

*D. Fyfe Maxwell, Corfe Mullen, Dorset*

THE planning of a new garden requires as much consideration as the planning of a new house; in fact it is well if the two can be designed as one conjoined unit, the garden presenting a natural sequence to the building. A few long sessions of armchair gardening, before a sod is turned pays handsome dividends as it is not always possible to rectify errors later as I can testify in the light of experience.

It is evident that a house built of stone calls for the use of stone where retaining walls or paved paths are contemplated, whereas brick paths and walls are set more appropriately near a house built of bricks, the resultant blending of house and garden being rendered smooth and pleasing to the eye. This may perhaps be regarded as a counsel of perfection, and is not always practical when an existing house is being taken over.

This is not to suggest that a brick built house should not have a rock garden, or rock outcrops in the heather garden or border; it most certainly should. But it may be wise to make a break, like a belt of trees or shrubs, between house and heathers, perhaps planted in broken clumps so that the view is not obscured, the size of such planting depending much on the size of the garden. Initial enthusiasm should be tempered by the realisation of hard work to come. A garden that demands too much attention is tiresome and becomes liable to neglect, so its size and complexity must be such that its upkeep is within the scope of that which can be provided by the family or available paid labour.

No group of plants needs less looking after than heathers; no other group of plants provides bloom right through the year as do heathers. They are completely garden-worthy, and their uses are legion.

I always think of the first of June as the "New Years Day" of the heather calendar. Two of the native heaths, the Bell and the Cross-leaved, are then beginning to show colour. It is but a whisper, but it increases to a roar in August and September, and modulates its tone in October and November as the winter-flowering heaths start to bloom. The dreariest days of the year see them well in bloom; come gales, snow and ice, some are found in flower as many can testify, though we have sometimes had to scrape the snow away to find them. In the case for hardy heathers in the garden continuity of blooming and toughness are paramount.

One is often asked "Are heathers easy to grow?" and "Are they worth a place in the garden?" To both questions the answer is "Yes". Many do not attempt to grow them as they believe they require special soil, will not transplant, fret for the open moors when confined to the garden and anyway are difficult to propagate. Nearly all gardens will



grow the Winter ones, and practically every garden, in which there is no lime or chalk, will grow *all* the hardy sorts. They all require full sun, except *Erica carnea* and its varieties which will flower in light shade.

If the soil is boggy, *Erica Tetralix*, *E. ciliaris* and their hybrids will prosper, also the Irish forms of *E. mediterranea*; if the soil is dry, lime free and sandy it will grow all sorts, but needs plenty of peat or leaf mould worked round the roots at planting time, which should be kept moist until the plants are established, and all heathers like summer dressings of peat, leaf mould or even sawdust.

If the soil is naturally limey, or has been artificially rendered so, it is wise to keep to *E. carnea*, *E. mediterranea* and their varieties; *E. australis* and *E. terminalis* are also generally safe, and even *E. vagans* prospers if the lime content is not too heavy, and generous top dressings of peat are provided. When in doubt it is always safer to try a few pilot plants, and be guided by results.

Should the soil be sticky clay, do not despair! Remove all perennial weeds and build up 8-12 inches of light lime-free peaty soil; always build up from the existing surface, as to dig out is to court 'ponding' after the winter rains. The same treatment is necessary if it is desired to grow the lime haters when the natural soil is chalky, or has been rendered alkaline by the addition of lime. Digging out or mixing acid soils or peat is not a long term proposition, as eventually the lime will seep both up and through to reach the normal surface level.

One does not expect heathers to grow on clay, yet I have found *all three* of the common species together with the *Cornish Heath* doing this, on the Goonhilly Downs in the Lizard district of Cornwall. It would appear the site was a last-wartime camp, where large patches of the top-soil had been removed exposing the clay subsoil; when I saw it it was

covered with 3 to 4 year old heathers, and on examination I found the roots tended to keep to the surface rather than bore down into the clay. A certain amount of 'dieback' was evident as a result of summer baking and cracking. The surface was covered with perhaps as much as a quarter of an inch of decaying and decayed matter, which was quite a build-up for so short a time. The falling leaves and shoots were, by degrees, forming top-dressing and it is reasonable to suppose, as time went on, the heathers would improve progressively. Top-dressing is good garden practice. This dictum applies to every branch of gardening, but perhaps especially in the Heather Garden, shoots touching the peat will root into it readily.

Much of the soil in the Lizard district consists of quite a strong loam, some of it above a clay subsoil. This is the natural home of the Cornish Heath, *E. vagans*, and gardens on similar soil can make a feature of the beautiful varieties of this heath without having to modify the soil in any way.

Not only will heathers exist on clay, but they will grow in practically pure sand, often landward of sand dunes. Here the Ling, *Calluna vulgaris*, can be seen as a dwarf shrub of two or three inches in height, with every shoot forming roots in the sand as the wind builds it up amongst the little branches; the plant may spread to one to two feet across, but the salt laden winds of the dunes tend to dwarf these heaths, though this distinctive habit is mainly due to the diet of sand on which they have to exist, for so poor is it that the plant is not able to produce tall strong growths.

It might be expected that such plants would revert to a normal shape and size if moved to the luxury of garden conditions, but this is seldom the case. Such garden varieties as *Calluna minima*, *C. pygmaea*, *C. The Pygmy* and others are typical sand-starved heathers, and are useful



for planting in paving and for making heather paths.

Is it possible to name another genus so versatile, so all-embracing, as the Hardy Heathers? In height, they range from two inches to 8 to 10 feet, in distribution from the wet chilled North to the parched baked South. There are heathers for almost any soil condition, and heathers to flower every month of the year out of doors, come rain, come sun. Though they love the sun, there is one species that will give of its best in partial shade.

Once established they form a weed-free carpet, and are practically self supporting. There is no digging or hoeing; the only service they require is to cut some of the sorts back to the length of the current flower spikes, after blooming. For this small labour, performed less than once a year, per plant (as some sorts do not require cutting at any time) the garden enjoys a wealth of bloom, the year through.

In what capacity can they be used? Their uses are legion—here are some of them. A Mountain Heather Garden—A Moorland Heather Garden—A Heather Border—The Rock Garden—The Wild Garden—The Mixed Shrub Border—The Heather House. The small sorts can be used for edging, and the tall ones for hedges. The miniatures may be planted between the stones in paving, or bedded in to make entire paths for the heather garden, the wild garden or the rock garden; they will stand up to a lot of wear. *Erica carnea*, because it will flower in slight shade, makes a splendid carpet between well spaced trees and shrubs. In beds, one variety to a bed, heathers are very effective on formal lawns. There are varieties that are specially useful for floral arrangements, and at least one variety that will dry well, if allowed to dry off slowly with its stems in water, looking almost like fresh sprays throughout the winter. What a variety of uses, and what a choice of material the

heather family offers the gardener. And once the garden is made, what a return for so little labour.

In such a garden there is an air of peacefulness . . . almost an odour of sanctity. In such a place, one can *live* in the present, forgetting the turmoil of the world outside.

## *Cape Heaths*

*Dr. Ronald Gray, Hindhead, Surrey*

THERE are in the world, excluding South Africa, only some dozen species of heath and heather, and of these three of the so called 'Tree Heaths' may not survive a 1947 or 1963 winter, except in sheltered positions.

When making my Heather Garden, I felt that heathers (*Callunas*) and heaths (*Ericas*) should predominate, but that some space should be found for shrub and tree members of the large family *Ericaceae*, such as *Gaultheria* spp., *Kalmia*, *Ledum*, *Andromeda*, *Pieris* etc., and as background, in the distance, some tall *Rhododendrons*.

In the genus *Calluna*, there is only one species, viz. *vulgaris*, the rest belong to the genus *Erica*. In both genera there are numerous variations, colour both of foliage and flowers, different flowering periods, shape and height of growth etc. so that the hardy heath garden appears as though it contained more than a hundred different plants, so unlike in appearance and yet limited to a dozen species in the two genera. It was these facts that took me to study the Cape Heaths, of which there are more than 500 species. If 12 species would produce such a beautiful garden, what could be done with 500 species?

I retired in 1937 with the intention of visiting South Africa in the autumn of 1938. In October of that year I

saw Hitler's shadow looming in the distance; in 1939 that shadow became a reality. Then followed four years of war, and at the end of that time other circumstances prevented the journey, until finally the onset of advancing years removed all hope of seeing these beautiful plants in their native habitat. I had therefore to rest content in cultivating the 70 odd species that have passed through my hands, and of these some 60 species flourish to-day. From a record kept in 1962, I see that April was the best month, 22 species being in flower, and June and July the worst, the numbers being reduced to 7 and 3. In the other months the average was 15.

I suppose no genus of plants has had more artistic skill devoted to it than South African heaths, and most of this some 150 years ago, or more. There is an interesting book, entirely devoted to a heather garden made by the then Duke of Bedford, called "Hortus Ericaeanus Woburnensis", and published in 1825. A quotation from the Introduction is of some interest:

"I have long been an admirer of that beautiful tribe of plants the *Genus Erica*, and have frequently lamented that so many of the species (chiefly natives of the Cape of Good Hope) should have been lost to the country, either from indifference or neglect on the part of nurserymen, or because this particular genus, whether from the difficulties attending the cultivation of the plants, or from any other cause, has been out of fashion amongst our collectors.

"In 1822 when I began to recover from a severe attack of illness, which had unfitted me for almost every other occupation, I determined on commencing a collection of Heaths, exotic as well as indigenous; and if in this attempt I have been able to beguile even a single hour of its irksomeness during a protracted period of sickness and





*A Woodland Heather Garden in Dorset*  
*Reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. Maxwell & Beale Ltd.*



*Calluria  
vulgaris*  
H. E. Beale



*A Heather  
Bank*







*Sir John Charrington and Mr. John F. Letts on the Society's exhibit  
at Fison's Garden Centre, London, W.C.*

suffering, I am abundantly grateful to that Providence which in its universal dispensation has permitted me to indulge in a pursuit at once so pleasing and so rational”.

Many amateur gardeners have been tempted by the beauty of the flowers, but like the nurserymen, gave up the struggle because of the high death rate. Some 40 years ago a nurseryman I knew grew some 12 species but gave up because of the large number of his plants that became only suitable for the bonfire.

The difficulties in growing them are . . . (1) The plants are not hardy, and must spend from late September to June in a greenhouse, in which the temperature may be allowed to drop to 40 degrees F. The greenhouse should be well aired, but protection from cold wind is more important than heat. When used for house decoration the plants soon perish. (2) Watering. I read some years ago “He who knows how to water Cape Heaths can water any plant in existence”. (3) The fact is that the plants originate the other side of the equator so that the best time to take cuttings is the worst time for trying to root them here. The four days journey by air may do some harm. (4) Some 12 species of seeds are given to members of the South African Botanical Society, but there is little variation annually. Friends in South Africa may help with seeds and/or cuttings, and one or two nurserymen in the Cape supply a few species. (5) I know of no other amateur grower in this country and so exchange is impossible.

Some 30 years ago the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens had a fair collection, but I know nothing of its condition to date, but some three years ago the Director of Kew Gardens, Sir George Taylor, decided to try and improve the very moderate collection there was there, and received enthusiastic support from the Curator, Mr. Stenning M.B.E. A visit I was allowed to pay recently behind the scenes to

the Propagating Department showed great promise.

Three species flood the Christmas market. One, *Erica gracilis*, has small rose-coloured flowers, a second, *E. nivalis*, with small white flowers, a third, *E. ventricosa* with a corolla one inch, or more, long, rosy and waxy; the name suggests the shape. These three are species.

Lastly there are in the Christmas collection, two horticultural hybrids . . . *E. hyemalis* and *E. Vilmoreana*, the latter divided into rather similar varieties, e.g. *E.V. President Carnot*, *President Felix Faure*, *King Edward VII* and others. The names suggest the dates of the hybridisations. These are nearly all used for house decoration, and seldom see a second Christmas.

## *Heathers in the Landscape*

*Walter L. Irvine, A.I.L.A., Heswall, Cheshire*

I HAVE always looked on the Heath family as the Gypsies of the plant world, and their use in the garden, large or small, only justified if they are properly treated as such. My personal instincts as a landscape architect are all in favour of what, for want of a better phrase, is usually called "Wild or Natural Landscape", and in this connection heathers have a strong claim for inclusion.

I suppose what one looks for as the ideal site is one that is well contoured with outcrops of red sandstone (such as we have in the Wirral Peninsula in Cheshire), which enable us to establish tumbling clumps and breadths of these beautiful shrubs. The broken stone serves admirably to keep the light soil moist. Granite can be equally accommodating, even with its rugged hard outlines superlative with the soft greens and bronzes—indeed all the foliage of heathers supplies a most sumptuous softness by contrast.



Heathers are quite amenable to being planted in light shade, and indeed, the more tender *Daboecias*—as most of us learned to our cost early this year—definitely need shelter for survival.

One reads in the garden journals that heathers are useful “at the front of the shrub border”. To me the phrase itself is anathema. A properly designed shrub garden should contain “inlets” into which drifts (*not* groups) of heathers may weave. This, I think, particularly holds good when there are *rhododendrons*. Their presence is of value to the large shrubs and their appearance, with their attractive foliage hues, can harmonise perfectly. I know a most successful blending of *Rhododendron concatenans*, with its lovely violet foliage, the pink/grey of *Erica Tetralix mollis* and the pink and ruby flowers.

My own feeling is that they should be planted in these drifts allowing a few from the ends of each drift to interplant, so that a few white flowers appear in a pink planting, and vice versa. The shape of the drifts should change from, say, fish-shape to kidney-shape, and any haphazard variation. What they must not look like is a series of circular dumps. Allow, if the heather garden is a large area rather divorced from the remainder of the site, for narrow slits of access. If your soil is light and quickly dry, you need no made-up path. I say this because any artificiality in the heather garden can so violently detract from the moorland effect—even grass, though it may be a necessity, is really too “dressy”. And moorland, with its gentle contours, should be the goal of all our aims.

As all good natural landscape calls for diversity in growth we should so break up our planting drifts as to mingle them, not only in colour but in their shape and outline. At the same time one does not want too violent contrasts, as would occur if *Erica terminalis* were planted next to the smaller

growing forms of *cinerea*. On the other hand, the bulky *vagens* varieties would provide sufficient diversity. One must remember that on any moorland, tall or vertical growing shrubs are wholly found in the hollows, or by the edges of streams, where they find additional wind shelter as well as moisture.

The tree heaths are in a category of their own, and except in a few very sheltered areas, cannot be included in the open moorland. Here in Wirral I find *Erica arborea alpina* got considerably damaged last winter.

There are many dwarf and medium-growing shrubs which can harmonise or contrast with our heathers. But as I have already suggested, those that grow vertically should, I think, be found a site on one or two of the edges of the area, where they can be assimilated with other shrubs. I am thinking of those brooms which, even when pruned annually, can obtrude too violently. In a heather garden, however, *Cytisus Beanii* (18 inches) is admirable. So are *C. procumbens*, with its intricate branching (18 inches) and the delightful *C. purpurea* in all its forms. Except in a large area the brilliant *C. kewensis* grows too wide—easily eight feet across. This broom, however, makes a lovely companion to any of the prostrate junipers.

*Genista*, of course, provides a further golden contrast in the heather garden. The common gorse (*Ulex*), should be banned because of its unwanted seedlings, but the double variety is good, and so are the dwarf-growing *G. Lydia* (2 feet), and the slightly tender *G. hispanica*: although I have grown it as a dense shrub five by six feet, it is more often under four feet. The prostrate *G. pilosa* makes a most attractive mat of deep green foliage and golden flowers. I have always had a liking for using yellow as a ribbon, varying in width—a “gleam of sunshine”.

Some of the *alpine rhododendrons* could be included with

advantage, and so could a few *Cassiope*, but in both instances the small drifts should be confined to important parts such as a junction of two paths. On no account should any of the evergreen *azaleas* be included, as their appearance is altogether too brilliant and exotic.

Dwarf *conifers* certainly call for inclusion but I dislike in this context those that grow vertically, such as *Juniperus hibernica*. On no account should the dwarf or slow-growing *Pinus montana mughus* be left out. It was created for a heather garden! On the fringes one can well assort *Juniperus sabina pfitzeriana* and in such company and its protection take a chance with *Erica australis*, and in special shelter *Erica lusitanica*.

With these tree heaths I have found a happy conjunction with the erect rosemary (sometimes called Jessop's variety), both as regards flowers and foliage.

One could go on naming many harmonies and contrasts, but only with the danger of making the heather garden a restless collection of colour clots. First and last the heather landscape is smooth, rounded and continuous. Let us leave it like that.



"Supposing an individual had the penance imposed on him of being forbidden to cultivate more than one genus of ornamental plants, is there a genus he could make a choice of at all to be compared with the *Ericas* . . . perpetually green, perpetually in flower, of all colours and many shapes." Wm. McNab. "Treatise on Cape Heaths". 1832.



. . . there is this about these heathers: Never at any season need their blooming be a half-hearted affair. At no time do their blossoms suggest by feebleness of effort that they have a difficulty in maintaining the reputation they have won. Whether it be the darkest hours of mid-winter, under the trials of a blazing August sun, or at any other moment of the year, one or other of the heaths will be giving colour in bountiful profusion.

A. T. JOHNSON



## *New and lesser known Heather Varieties*

### *The Wanderer*

SINCE the first decade of the century, when the well-known firm of Backhouse of York (now alas! extinct) turned their attention to raising new varieties of *Erica carnea*, little was done until the 1920's and 1930's in bringing out new heaths. Then a number of new varieties were introduced into British gardens, largely by one firm. After those years there was a pause in the advent of new sorts, apart from the occasional one, until the 1950's when other names began to appear in the Heather World, coinciding with the introduction of new varieties.

In the last 10 years so many new sorts have come to enrich our gardens that it is quite difficult to keep up with them all. One notes that Variety B is definitely an improvement on Variety A, but so often, and before very long, C is introduced that really supersedes B—and another name is added to the catalogues.

I have no wish to make this article into a mere catalogue of names, and it is not easy to know where to stop (to keep within the space I have been given), but the following are some we like and believe will become generally popular.

Of the *Callunas* of recent introduction grown for their flower we especially like *Barnett Anley*, F.C.C., R.H.S., long spikes of soft petunia-purple; *Elsie Frye*, a new double white; *Joan Sparkes*, A.M., R.H.S., double mauve, useful for cut bloom; *Peter Sparkes*, F.C.C., R.H.S., a deeper "H.E. Beale"; *Ralph Purnel*, red-purple plumes; *Ruth Sparkes*, double white with golden foliage; *Silver Spire*, long spire-like shoots with white flowers in abundance.

*Callunas* noticeable for their foliage, *Blazeaway*, most lovely foliage turning shades of gold, orange, flame and,

in the winter, red with light mauve flowers; *Fred J. Chapple* A.M., R.H.S., foliage of several colours, with flowers of a purple shade; *Gold Haze*, A.M., R.H.S., most aptly named, for it is a blaze of gold, with pure white flowers; *Joy Vanstone*, foliage which deepens from orange to a reddish shade in winter; pink flowers; *Robert Chapman*, A.M., R.H.S., probably the best foliage plant to date, foliage changing from gold to red over the months. Purple flowers.

*Callunas* for carpeting and rockery, *Foxhollow Wanderer*, 6 ins. Spreading habit with long spikes of purple flowers, bears treading on; *Humpty Dumpty*, 4 ins. attractive miniature, with occasional white flowers; *multicolor*, A.M., R.H.S., 6 ins, foliage in shades of orange, yellow and bronze.

In *Daboecias* I can recommend *D. praegerae*, with salmon-pink bells with no purple in them.

Recent *E. carnea* varieties include *Foxhollow Fairy*, profusion of pink and white flowers, with trailing habit; *Furzey*, large rosy-pink flowers through most of winter; *White Glow*, plants have stiff bushy habit and pure white flowers, foliage is sulphur coloured (on some soils) in summer.

There are a number of recent *Cinerea* varieties which include, *Ann Berry*, bright golden yellow foliage and pink flowers which are quite freely shown; *Cevennes*, lavender-rose flowers, attractive over a long period; *Eden Valley*, cannot be left out; almost a bi-colour, lilac fading to white at the base, and *Miss Waters*, almost a bi-colour, with the process the other way round, as buds open white and blooms turn lilac-purple; finally, the darkest of all *Cinereas*, *Velvet Night* described in the catalogue as "black purple".

There is space for only a mention of two good *E.hybrida* varieties, *Arthur Johnson*. (*E.mediterranea* × *E.carnea*) 2 ft. high, clear rose blooms over long period; *Cherry Stevens*,

18 ins. high, deep rosy-pink.

Two recent *Tetralix* varieties of note from the Underwood Bros., both with grey-green foliage. *Daphne Underwood*, is a wonderful variety, with bright carmine-rose flowers; *Ken Underwood*, bushy habit with large cerise-burnt red flowers, about the darkest of the *Tetralix*.

And now the latest introduction to the *Tetralix* family—“*Pink Star*” a most attractive plant bearing many star like flowers of bright pink, amidst soft grey foliage. The flowers are most distinct, as they are held upright, whilst the type produces drooping terminal clusters.

To add to the many lovely things we know in *E.vagans*, I would add *Birch Glow*, vivid rose-red flowers, which really do give an effective glow.

My space is up, and there are so many more I should like to have included, but this must do for now.



## *Growing Heathers in Lime and Chalk Soils*

*A. G. Pannell, B.Sc.*

EXPERIENCE over the past few years has shown that calcifuge heathers can now be grown successfully in soils containing lime or chalk with the help of Sequestrene, an iron chelate product introduced in 1961.

In the past many attempts have been made to grow heathers in lime soils by importing large quantities of peat and growing in pockets of this material but these attempts were only successful where the surrounding soil had very little



lime in it. In most lime soils drainage water eventually reduced the acidity of the peat and, as with the direct plantings, the growth became stunted, the leaves turned yellow and the plants had to be replaced.

It was this leaf yellowing which suggested that the cause of the trouble might be iron deficiency, that is to say the calcifuges were either more sensitive than other plants to locking up by lime of the natural iron supplies in the soil or, their iron requirements were much higher than other plants. The discovery of Sequestrene made it possible to put this theory to the test for here was a chemical which supplied the plants with iron for a full season following a soil application in late winter or early spring. In the past, attempts to supply plants with iron have always failed because the ordinary iron salts were quickly turned into an insoluble form in the soil and in this form could not be taken up by the plants. Sequestrene has a complex "claw" structure which protects the soluble iron from reaction with lime in the soil.

Applications of Sequestrene to calcifuge heathers growing in lime soils have resulted in very much improved growth and flowering with leaves of a good, green colour in comparison with plants untreated which have remained stunted with yellow leaves and few flowers. From the results of Sequestrene applications already made to heathers, it can be said that Sequestrene offers the chance for gardeners on lime soils to grow a much wider range of heathers than has previously been possible. Where heathers are already growing in pockets of peat in these gardens and are showing signs of yellowing it should be possible to improve the growth by Sequestrene application.

Sequestrene is supplied as a powder for addition to water, the mixture then being applied to the soil round the heather plant. The recommended application time is February or

March (after planting in the case of new beds) but it may be applied to established plants which show chlorosis or stunting, at any time during the growing season. If Sequestrene is applied during the season it is important to hose down the bed well if dry weather follows to wash the chemical down to the root zone. Application should be repeated each season, although it may be found that a lower rate can be used in successive seasons.

An application of Sequestrene may also benefit heathers growing in acid soils where the bed has been established for many years. Experience by nurserymen growing azaleas and rhododendrons shows that these plants could show distinct symptoms of chlorosis or a general lack of vigour even though there was no trace of lime in the soil. The soil had, however, been planted with calcifuge subjects for very many years and it was thought that during this time the iron reserves in the soil had been depleted. It was the opinion of this nurseryman that an application of Sequestrene could give a new lease of life to a number of well-established calcifuge plants growing in gardens with acid soil. Since other factors can contribute to a lack of vigour it is suggested that in this case Sequestrene is applied as a trial to a few plants before making large scale applications.



## *Heather Shandy*

*F. J. Chapple, Port Erin, Isle of Man*

SOMETIMES one is asked: can you make a floral cocktail? Have you got the recipe? Hilda Hunter, in an article in the Liverpool Daily Post, tells us that one of the delights of the breakfast and tea table in Scotland has always been the rich, amber coloured heather honey, sweet

but with a tang all its own, a scent of the heath and the moorland.

To the writer of the article, it is not surprising that a plant which yields such delicate sweetness would and does still produce an attractive liquor.

Heather ale is said to have been a favourite beverage of the ancient Scots, but the traditional art of distilling it is not known.

Hilda Hunter reassures us all was not lost, for according to Miss Marion McNeill in "The Scots Kitchen" there is a recipe from an old coverless book of cottage cookery. The ingredients are heather, hops, balm, syrup, ginger and water. And this is how you prepare the brew:

Fill a large pot with heather in full bloom. Cover with water; boil for an hour then strain into a tub. Measure the liquid and for every 12 bottles add 1oz. ginger,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. hops, 1 lb. of golden syrup. Boil 20 minutes then strain again into the cask. Let it stand until milk-warm; add a cupful of balm, cover with a cloth till next day. Then skim, bottle, and cork. It will be fit for drinking in about three days.

Well there it is, all clearly specified, the very ingredients of Heather Ale. We really must try it when the heather is in bloom. If any reader has already sampled this Calluna shandy we would like to hear about it.

*With acknowledgement to the Liverpool Daily Post.*

★ ★ ★

It may be pertinacity, but to my eye these grey hills, and all this wild border country, have beauties peculiar to themselves. I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold, and stern, and solitary about it. When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented garden land, I begin to wish myself back again among my own honest grey hills; and if I did not see the heather, at least once a year, *I think I should die!*

SIR WALTER SCOTT



## Questions and Answers

*The Editor is interested to receive questions concerning Heathers; if he cannot answer them, he knows people who can, or ought to be able to. An answer will be sent by post to the questioner, as soon as possible, and a selection of Q and A's will be printed in the next "Year Book". Here are some that have already reached us.*

**Q** Can heaths be hybridised by humans? (PLATT. KENT)

**A** The short answer is 'Yes'. *Callunas* rely mostly on wind, *Ericas* on insects, and both are tiny to deal with. Begin with *Daboecia*; having larger bells it is easier to remove the pollen—bearing anther before the pollen ripens. Next try *E. ciliaris* (as it has fairly large bells) on other heaths. D.F.M.

\*

**Q** Can anyone give the symptoms and cure, or for that matter any local cure, that have been successful for the heath disease, Marasmius? (ARGYLL. SCOTLAND)

**A** In the first place, it is doubtful if this disease is of serious importance, and it is said that heathers which are properly burned over to destroy the old growth and which enjoy proper drainage, do not suffer from it. It is not well known in England, and we are not very well acquainted with it, but it can be found in the Scottish Journal of Agriculture under the following references . . . Braid K. W. and Tervet I. W. 1937, 'Certain botanical aspects of the dying-out of heather'. (*Calluna vulgaris*). Scot.J.Agric. 20, pp. 365-372. MacDonald J. A. 1948. 'Heather rhizomorph fungus in Scotland'. Scot.Agric. 28. pp. 99-101.

Donald Green, Plant Pathologist.

R.H.S. Wisley.

We suggest you dig up affected plants and burn, afterwards water with well-diluted Jeyes Fluid, replanting a year later. It is known as the 'Horse Hair Fungus'. J.F.L.

\*

**Q** Is there any explanation of the fact that *Callunas* indigenous to Scotland were the only varieties to suffer in the severe winter 1962/63? I lost 25% of my 3 year old plants of *Peter Sparkes, hiemalis, Goldsworth Crimson, Mullion, August Beauty, Mairs Variety, Sister Anne, tenuis* and *C. W. Nix*. (ARGYLL. SCOTLAND)

**A** We find that most heathers die of drought through prolonged wind damage after the snows have melted . . . and if your plants are on a

dry sandy site this would have aggravated the position in the Spring.

J.F.L.

Were the wild *Callunas* in your district in any way affected? They can be badly 'tipped' by sudden frosts about April after a warm growing period, even in the south of England, whereas *Ericas* appear to stand it better. Had they been transplanted or heavily hoed before the frosts? Was the surrounding soil lifted by frost? *Callunas* are very shallow rooting.

D.F.M.

I have heard that in April you had warm sun in Argyll, when the thermometer sometimes went up to 60 degrees in the daytime, then fell to 10 degrees of frost at night, causing great damage on certain moorlands, and splitting the stems of *E. vagans* in gardens. The high day-time temperature (according to my informant) made *Callunas* especially break into growth which was immediately killed by the night frosts which froze the sap in the old stems as well.

ED.

\*

Q How fast do heathers grow? How fast do *Tree Heaths* and *Mediterranea* grow? They come from growers ex pots, about 12-18 inches high; how long will they be before they make a bush? If it is a case of 5 to 10 years, then anyone like myself who has turned into the straight would be well advised to plant something else (FOLKESTONE)

A Pot grown *Tree Heaths*, when planted out, will sit for a season, and then grow quite quickly (though they may want protecting from wind, as they are very brittle) if they are given good conditions; however quite small plants flower profusely. If you wish to use them as 'cover' you can not do better than plant the two *E. carnea* *Springwood* varieties between the *Tree Heaths*. They are dwarf and spreading covering a matter of yards in a few years.

D.F.M.

By your address you probably have chalk in the soil, so you are able to grow the *Tree Heaths*, and *E. mediterranea* and *E. carnea*, and a few of the summer flowering sorts, all of which are quick growing once they have become established. The 'Trees' may be cut by a severe winter, but they would then become bushier. Rate of growth in any plant depends so much on so many influences, e.g. soil, position, how much care and attention is given etc.

J.F.L.

\*

Q (a) What is the most suitable type of peat for the growing of heaths and heathers?

(GERRARDS CROSS. BUCKS.)

A There is probably difference of opinion on this subject, and not everyone will agree with me when I say that heathers in their natural habitat seem to grow better in Sedge Peat than in Sphagnum Peat. We feel this is due to the fact that whilst Sphagnum has a higher water absorption level the degree of water retention is very much less than in Sedge Peat and it tends to dry out very quickly. Sphagnum tends to break down quickly; Sedge Peat, as it is dug out on the moor, retains its lumpiness until the weather breaks it up.

W.A.L.

Q (b) What is the best method of propagation for the various heaths and heathers? Is mist propagation any advantage?

(GERRARDS CROSS. BUCKS.)

A The simplest, method, of course, is layering if only a few plants are required. A number of *Callunas* especially will divide very easily, with plenty of roots on the divisions. To get a larger stock of any variety cuttings are the answer. As you say in your letter that you have read Mr. Chapple's book, you will have found full directions how to carry out these operations. As to whether mist propagation is an advantage, I find opinions differ; with soft-wooded cuttings there is surely no doubt about its value, but with shrubs some growers like it, others are not keen. One said to me "Heather cuttings are so easy to root anyway, why bother". If you would like more information, please write to the Editor.

Q Some natural heather hybrids are readily enough found in the wild, e.g. *E. ciliaris* x *E. Tetralix*, but have e.g. *E. Tetralix* x *E. vagans*, or *E. cinerea* x *Calluna vulgaris* ever been investigated by botanists for, perhaps, chromosome number?

(PLATT. KENT)

A Natural hybrids between *Tetralix* and *vagans* have been found in the Lizard district of Cornwall, but only rarely, e.g. x *Gwavas* and x *Williamsiana* are the two best known ones. A chance seedling in Messrs Veitch's nursery in Exeter is *E. hybrida Veitchii*, incidentally the only known heather hybrid to be fertile. The first *E. carnea* x *mediterranea* hybrid recorded was *darleyensis* which occurred in James Smith's Darley Dale Nurseries many years ago. *E. Stuartii* from Connemara is said to be *E. mediterranea hibernica* x *Tetralix*, but there is doubt about this parentage on the grounds of period of flowering and distance of recorded stations; therefore it might be wiser to say, of doubtful validity. The heathers usually listed as *E. hybrida* W. G. Notley and Winifred Whitley, and claimed to be bi-generic hybrids of *E. cinerea* x *Calluna vulgaris* are invalid. They are pure *E. cinerea*, except that the bells have spilt into petals and are superficially similar to the flowers of *Calluna*. Perhaps they are a throw-back (a chance in many millions) to a period in evolution before the petals had fused into a bell the better to protect the reproductive organs of the flower.

Except for the *Daboecias*, we know of no man-made hybrids. Neither have we been able to discover any record of botanical investigation into a chromosome count. It might be a rewarding study.

D.F.M.



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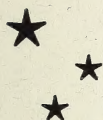
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