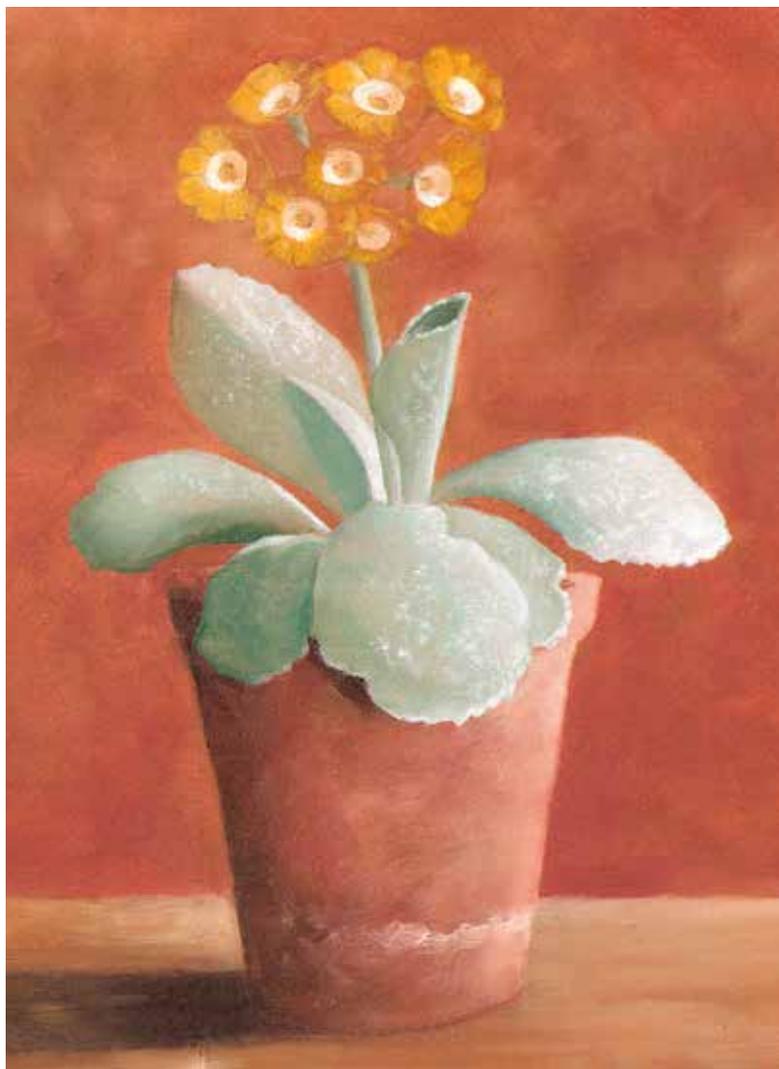


HORTUS

No. 101 SPRING 2012



Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Spring, New York

PART ONE: SPRING

CAROLINE BURGESS



Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring occupies a rocky hilltop eleven hundred feet above sea level in the Hudson River's picturesque highlands, an hour's drive north of New York City. Now a public garden, it began life in 1958 as a country retreat when Frank and Anne Cabot built a house and started to garden.

Always magical, Stonecrop began as something of an alchemical marriage. The land, with its dramatic topography, thick woodlands and open pastures with striking views of distant mountains was a gift from Anne's grandmother, Evelina Perkins. It was a forty-acre inholding at Glynwood, the Perkins family's three-thousand-acre farm. Its architecture – from the house to the potting- and tool-sheds – was carefully derived from the vernacular architecture

of Quebec's Charlevoix region, a nod to the Cabot compound at La Malbaie, on the St Lawrence River. Above the Hudson a new family place was forged where Frank, Anne, their three children, Colin, Currie and Marianne, as well as generations of friends and relations, enjoyed the idyllic pleasures of country life. For the senior Cabots, such pleasures included gardening, particularly with alpine.

Stonecrop began with Anne. Inspired by her family's rock garden next door, she set out to create her own. Wherever she dug, she struck rock, and with more than a dash of irony, Stonecrop was born. Her alpine fever eventually infected Frank, initiating a long gardening life together. By bringing my own influences and ideas to the mix, I too joined the Stonecrop family in an almost accidental fashion.

In the midst of obtaining my Kew Diploma in Horticulture, I hoped to win an award supporting relevant travel and study. My first step was to seek advice from my mentor, Rosemary Verey. (My relationship with her dates from when I was thirteen, and began riding one of her ponies. A few weeks later I started to work for her in the garden at Barnsley House and continued during afternoons and weekends throughout my school years. Eventually, I became Rosemary's head gardener, a post I held for four years before studying at Kew.) When I called, Rosemary had just returned from the United States and was enchanted with a garden in New York City called Wave Hill. I wrote directly, asking if I could come to garden for them, gratis. As the award deadline drew nearer, and no response materialised, I called Rosemary again. She remembered meeting a man at her Wave Hill lecture who seemed to have 'connections' there, and suggested I call him for help. In ignorant bliss, I went off to a phone box with a handful of change and proceeded to call America, asking for someone whose name Rosemary had pronounced Cabeau. When he eventually came to the phone – my supply of coins dwindling – he dryly told me that in the United States the family name Cabot was pronounced with a hard 't'. He listened carefully to my story, and then said that he and his wife had a garden a bit further north in New York State. If I could work for them for six weeks, they would pay my airfare and provide me with

room and board. I later learnt that everything about the exchange was quintessential Frank. It took a bit of arranging to get away from Kew for that long, but all fell into place. By the end of my stay with the Cabots, it was settled that I would return to become the manager at Stonecrop in another year or so after I received my diploma. As it turned out, someone else received the long-ago Kew award, but in that phone box I launched an odyssey now thirty years in the making.

In addition to creating a place of singular beauty, the Cabots' goal at Stonecrop had long been to inspire fellow gardeners. Idealistic, energetic, and in possession of what could be termed a Classical education as a professional gardener, I was likewise eager that this endeavour would be more than the sum of its parts. I arrived for good in 1984. Existing garden areas were enhanced, new garden areas developed, and plans made for the future. Stonecrop Gardens, a fledgling not-for-profit enterprise, was opened to the public in 1992. Our small school of practical horticulture quickly followed, offering intensive one- and two-year internships for professionals as well as short courses for the general public. Stonecrop's official opening wasn't long after Frank Cabot founded the Garden Conservancy, a charitable organisation dedicated to preserving 'American gardens for the education and enjoyment of the public'. In many ways, both ventures developed in tandem.

Today Stonecrop consists of twelve acres of display gardens surrounded by more than fifty acres of fields and woodland. The plant collection is as diverse as the gardens themselves. There are woodland and water gardens, a grass garden, raised alpine stone beds, a cliff rock garden, a systematic order bed and an enclosed flower garden prominently featuring half-hardy and tropical plants. A conservatory and numerous speciality display houses showcase further horticultural rarities. In limited quantities, selected species from the gardens are offered to the public in the form of collected seeds and propagated plants. It is as we all had hoped, a garden for plant enthusiasts.

Spring

When I first took up my post in Cold Spring, I was accustomed to hard work and ready – with the fervour of youth – for my greatest challenge yet. I was not expecting that to be the extremes of climate and the windswept location itself. All these years later I still find that, for me, spring at Stonecrop is about searching for old friends in the garden, looking to see just what has survived the long winter.

The season essentially begins when the garden opens to the public on 1 April. This is not to say that winter is over, or that summer isn't about to begin. Traces of snow have been found here on the last day of May and the latest frost in the past decade was recorded on 21 May. April temperatures can swing from 15 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, while the range in May can be from 29 to 95 – a far cry from my native Gloucestershire but even so, this site has not made me a timid gardener. Having literally grown up with Rosemary Verey's deft use of half-hardy perennials and then been set loose in Kew's incomparably wide-ranging living collections, horticultural conservatism is not in my nature. We consistently trial and even succeed with items that by conventional wisdom should not grow at Stonecrop, or do so only with rather extraordinary efforts on the part of my colleagues, myself and our students. Gardening on this hilltop, however, has taught me a deep appreciation for the sturdy, reliable, and sometimes commonplace plants that greet me year after year.

To visualise Stonecrop in the spring let us imagine a stroll following the route suggested to all visitors, beginning at the Potting Shed, the garden's beating heart. Like the rest of our buildings, the proportions are rooted in Quebec, sturdy but not inelegant, conveying a welcoming sense of security. The steep bonnet roof is clad in weathered cedar shakes; walls are a subtle chalky tan; the window trim a creamy white; the doors our signature Stonecrop blue, something of a soft French blue. The Potting Shed is where visitors converge at the start of tours and where our office is located. It is also where staff and students gather each morning to chart the day and, rain or shine, where many of us tend to a wide

array of chores. It is the most comfortable place on site, relatively warm in cold weather and reasonably cool in the heat. It is also where we keep our communal food and drink, essential to keeping energy levels and spirits up through long days of physical labour. Everyone contributes something, and as gardeners are often enthusiastic cooks, the fare can be surprisingly good. Store-bought ginger snaps are never turned away, and countless cups of tea are shared. (When the blend is Russian Caravan I am invariably reminded of my numerous visits to another great gardener, Valerie Finnis, in Northamptonshire, including one occasion when I left with an enormous basket of ripe cherries balanced on the back of my motorbike. It also reminds of the role the Waterperry Horticultural School in Oxfordshire plays in my hopes for Stonecrop.)

Heading out from the Potting Shed we experience typical Stonecrop views. Our 1,970 square foot cruciform Conservatory rises Avalon-like out of water, framed by a pair of spring glories: a fine *Prunus* × *yedoensis*, large enough to scatter petals like pink snow and, on the far side of the pond, a sweeping, forty-foot-tall *Magnolia* ‘Elizabeth’, its yellow blossoms reflecting ad infinitum on the water’s surface, echoed by the bright yellow of *Iris pseudacorus* around the banks.

From there, we head towards the main house along the Fern Vista. This is a simple, satisfying space: a long, narrow lawn bounded on one side by a row of maples and a low, dry-stone wall, and on the other by a thick swathe of ostrich ferns set against high walls. An encouraging spring sight is the early daffodils blooming in the grass before the ferns come in to their own. The daffs are followed by a flush of muscari. I have been planting bulbs in earnest, often more than forty thousand a year, for nearly three decades. If the weather stays mild, Stonecrop is alight with spring bulbs for a month and a half – sometimes longer. Alas, though, it isn’t uncommon for a few unseasonably warm days to halt the show abruptly as we progress almost directly from winter to summer. This element of chance makes those long, luscious springs all the more precious, and it is for those that we plan. As they thrive and multiply here, daffodils still dominate the display. A few of my favourites



'Miss Jekyll' standing guard over the Inner Sanctum



The Wisteria Pavilion

include 'Thalia', 'W. P. Milner', 'Pipit' and 'Hawera', each lovely of form yet sturdy in nature and never failing to delight.

Rounding the corner at the end of the Fern Vista, the main house is suddenly visible through a small apple orchard. Still used by the Cabot family, this is another Québécois construction, here lined with an arcade of French doors. In its understated forecourt waits another spring treasure, *Halesia monticola* 'Vestita', lone survivor of a large shipment of trees and shrubs from Hillier's nursery in England in the late 1960s. A choice cultivar of an American native, this now forty-five-foot towering tree stands guard at the entrance to the Flower Garden, where on or about 15 May is covered in a profusion of very large soft pink bells.

The Flower Garden is actually a series of spaces, the Outer Sanctum, the Black Garden, the Skinny Vista and the Inner Sanctum, defined by eight-foot-high wooden walls to give protection from bitter winds and thus create an invaluable microclimate. The plantings here are densely layered and, without doubt, the garden's most labour-intensive area. In spring, when herbaceous growth is just beginning and these spaces feel relatively open, one can best appreciate the framework of trees, shrubs and garden structures – the tool shed, various elaborate benches, the fence itself, and an array of steeple-like trellises or *tuteurs*. Such clear structure prevents the garden – called 'a vault full of jewels' by the *New York Times* – from devolving into chaos. Another organising force is the bespectacled Miss Jekyll 'sculpture', standing guard over the Inner Sanctum. She receives an annual spring make-over – more salt hay and a new hessian dress. She has become rather stout over the years, but is no less admired.

Early in the year these vertical elements emerge from a sea of bulbs, predominantly tulips. It wouldn't be spring without the red-hot 'Queen of Sheba', the cool elegance of 'Spring Green', or the polished 'West Point', just like the United States Military Academy across the Hudson River from us. A favourite combination is *Tulipa* 'Apricot Beauty' and *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Gypsy Queen', both richly shaded from apricot through salmon and rose, but dramatically different in form and texture. As the tulips fade the bulb

display continues with an array of alliums and camassias – the latter being a garden-worthy dash of true Americana. Native to our moist north meadows, camassia bulbs – roasted, boiled or ground into flour – were a food staple for numerous First Nation peoples as well as the members of the 1804–06 Lewis and Clark expedition across the Western United States.

Leaving the Flower Garden, we discover a spring paradise in the Alpine House, the Raised Lime and Ericaceous Beds, the Pit House, the Raised Alpine Beds and further along, the Rock Ledge – ample evidence of Stonecrop’s historical emphasis on alpines. Disappointed with the selection of alpines grown in the United States, the Cabots, with typical aplomb, opened a mail-order business here in the early 1960s under the direction of Rex Murfitt, a long-time propagator at Ingwersen’s nursery on William Robinson’s famed Gravetye Estate in Sussex. Many venerable specimens remain, too many to recount, and the tradition of excellence continues.

I must, however, mention a large clump of *Adonis vernalis*, nestled beside a juniper in the Raised Beds, where the cheery yellow buttercups show to best advantage. Bulbs play a key role in these areas, as well. I never tire of the bronze shadings of *Tulipa whittallii* and *Euphorbia polychroma* with a base note of blue muscari, while *Alyssum armenum* and the aforementioned *Narcissus* ‘Hawera’ resonate at a higher pitch. Stonecrop now collaborates with the North American Rock Garden Society, hosting a major plant sale each April that attracts growers and collectors from far and wide.

Between the Raised Beds and the Rock Ledge is the Gravel Garden. One plant there always makes me pause. I made my first visit to Kiftsgate Court in Gloucestershire as a teenager, naturally in the company of Rosemary Verey. I remember two things quite clearly: Diany Binny sitting at the desk smoking a cheroot, and her hillside of *Lathyrus vernus*. I had to have it – the lathyrus, I mean, not the cheroot. Now I do, and am well pleased.

A slow stream flows down our precipitous Rock Ledge below the Gravel Garden, creating tiny pools and falls, with just enough sound to soothe visitors traversing the steepest steps. This water drops to the Lake where the Wisteria Pavilion is situated at one end.

Conceived as a piece, Ledge, Lake and Pavilion were just being built under Frank's direction when I started my life at Stonecrop. The airy pavilion bears the attenuated bonnet roof seen elsewhere in garden, here in a distinctive lattice form, as well as a series of 'moon' windows framing judiciously composed views. In spring the wisteria blooms in almost unnatural profusion, carefully (and wisely) held away from the wooden structure by a network of steel cables. The Cabots would typically leave Cold Spring for Canada earlier in the spring, which meant that it wasn't until recently that they first saw the culmination of their long-ago vision: lilac cascades illuminating black water.

Heading back up the hill is an extensive Woodland Garden. While there are many choice items (*Sinocalycanthus sinensis* and *Helleborus lividus* 'Ken Aslet' come to mind), native plants more than pull their weight. When all else is grey, the woods light up with the tiny white flowers of *Amelanchier canadensis*, the shadblow, a tree that blooms when shad are running in the Hudson River. Next, the classic *Cornus florida* takes the stage. Moving down in height, there are many great native shrubs. A favourite is fothersgilla, discovered by the American William Bartram, named for his English patron and first described in his 1791 *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida*. Well worth acquiring are both species, *Fothergilla major* and the smaller *F. gardenii*, as well as their excellent crosses. Fragrant, greenish-white bottlebrush inflorescences appear before the leaves emerge; its sturdy foliage is dark blue-green, making a long-lasting autumn show of brilliant yellow, orange and red on the same plant, very like its relative, the Persian ironwood, *Parrotia persica*.

The woodland floor is awash with native plants, including *Adiantum pedatum*, a fern of true grace; *Cypripedium calceolus* var. *pubescens*, the large yellow lady's slipper orchid; *Darmera peltata*, with massive leaves and great presence; *Epigaea repens*, the first flower seen in the New World by Mayflower passengers; *Erythronium americanum*, a spreader of charm; *Mertensia virginica*, Virginia bluebells; both *Sanguinaria canadensis* and the double-flowered *S. c. multiplex*, as well as the red-flowered *Trillium erectum* and the white *T. grandiflorum*.

A combination I find satisfying is the indigenous *Vancouveria hexandra* underneath *Rhododendron yakushimanum*. This leads to Gus's Slope which, in a very loose sense, is also comprised of native plants. Dr Gustav Malmquist was an early hybridiser of *Rhododendron mucronulatum* and *R. yakushimanum*, who developed some wonderful early-flowering, typically soft-pink varieties. As he worked in nearby Connecticut, Frank and I went to see him in 1991 and found we couldn't hold back. Our extensive collection is appropriately if rather obviously named. The stunning finale in our spring woodland and forests throughout the region comes with the flowering of *Kalmia latifolia*, an evergreen ericaceous shrub that erupts in clusters of white blossom.

It seems a dizzying tour, and yet there are still more significant garden areas that have not been mentioned. A larger omission has been made: in the process of introducing the garden features and springtime botanical highlights at Stonecrop, I've not had a chance to touch upon our staff, interns and visitors. These individuals are the lifeblood at Stonecrop, without which the garden would not, could not, be what it is. As we continue to explore Stonecrop through the seasons, be sure they will be given their due.

Notes and acknowledgements

My thanks to Kate Kerin, who greatly assisted me in the writing of this article. Kate received her Master's Degree in landscape architecture from Cornell University before completing the Stonecrop Internship Programme in 1999. In addition to her own garden-design practice she serves as Stonecrop's newsletter editor.

Page 40: Cholmondeley Among Puschkinias
(Cholmondeley is Stonecrop's Head of Rodent Control)

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HORTUS

No. 102 SUMMER 2012



Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Spring, New York

PART TWO: SUMMER

CAROLINE BURGESS

The most consistent aspect of summer at Stonecrop is the blur of activity. Visitors arrive from all points of the globe for our busiest season. Public programmes, including guided garden walks and special workshops, kick into high gear. Interns at our small School of Practical Horticulture, who arrive each year in February, have got their bearings and are really beginning to flourish. Most of the year's design work happens in summer – always a thrill – not to mention the staggering amount of planting and overall garden maintenance these warm months bring. Staff and interns alike are running from dawn to dusk. Knowing what our little team accomplishes, and relishing the pleasure this brings to our visitors, seems to fuel the Stonecrop mantra, *Keep Moving*.

Stonecrop's Flower Garden (as well as our less-visible School) best captures my own style, education, and passions as a gardener. It is an intensely designed, planted, and maintained space that is a world unto itself. Without question, it is the most labour-intensive summer project at Stonecrop. As soon as the last tulip fades, usually about 15 May, Operation FG begins. An astonishing number of plants is added over the seventeen-week period leading up to Stonecrop's annual garden party in early September. We estimate that at least six weeks of summer are spent on planting alone in the Flower Garden, which encompasses but a tiny fraction of our twelve gardened acres.

Taking a few steps back, the Flower Garden was actually my first project in Cold Spring. In a sense, it is where Stonecrop begins and so seemed the logical beginning for me. Anne and Frank Cabot had already started to garden between the house and horse barn, an area easily enjoyed by the Cabot family and their guests. They had also crafted and borrowed a magnificent sequence of surrounding spaces and views. One enters the house (and the FG) through a simple yet

elegant turf-and-gravel courtyard ringed in trees. On two sides, the house then opens to expansive vistas of fields, distant hills, and forest, while on the remaining side, a sun room and terrace unfurl into the series of rooms now known collectively as the Flower Garden. This juxtaposition of open and closed, small and large, natural and composed is a recurring theme at Stonecrop, each element strengthening the other and enlivening the garden experience. With that as a leaping-off point, I sought to create a flower garden for my patrons that was, on the best of days, enchanting, a true pleasure garden.

While working with Rosemary Verey and as a student at Kew, I visited countless gardens and worked with many gardeners, both famous and little known. In fact, I did my third-year thesis at Kew on the workings of the UK's National Garden Scheme (NGS) and for years previously had spent each Sunday visiting every NGS Open Garden that was within a day's ride on my motor bike. In addition to my work and studies, this mental catalogue of gardens provides me with a wealth of information and ideas on which to draw, as I did almost thirty years ago when I set to work in Cold Spring.

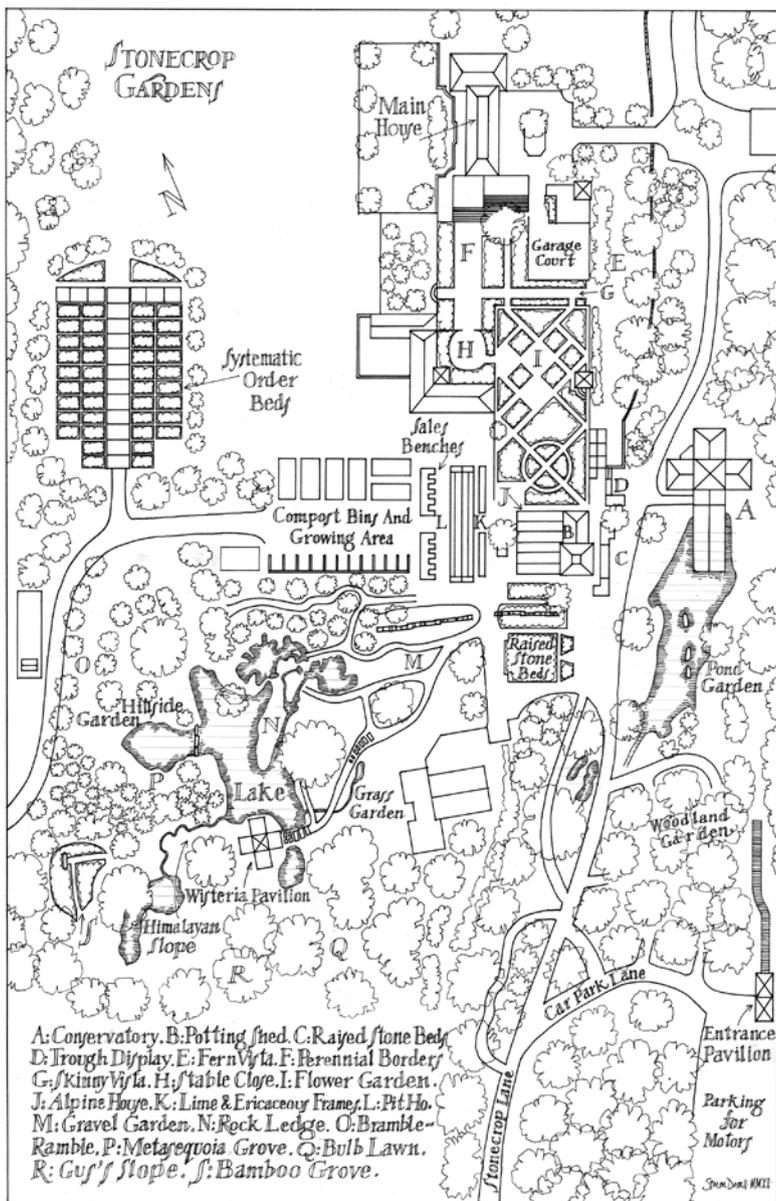
My favourite of many beloved gardens is Hidcote, in Gloucestershire, and I believed the place-making techniques employed by Lawrence Johnston could be used to similar effect at Stonecrop. I set about creating a series of rooms, vistas and focal points that encouraged one to stop and explore in detail, while the promise of further discovery – glimpses of rich colour, striking plants, and charming architectural elements; the splash of water and the heady scent of old roses just out of sight – established a natural flow from the house through the Flower Garden and beyond.

To implement this vision, a good bit of ground levelling and construction was required before new planting could begin. Using fencing, treillage and other architectural elements discussed in my spring article, the Outer Sanctum, the Stable Close, the Skinny Vista, and the Inner Sanctum – what we call the main section of the Flower Garden – were created. This structure anchors the Flower Garden, increases the sense of depth, and provides visual interest

throughout the year. The beds and paths comprising the Inner Sanctum are laid out primarily in squares laced with diagonal grass paths, while beds in the rest of the FG are rectangles of various depths.

In contrast to the low, tidy forms of alpiners and even woodlanders elsewhere at Stonecrop, I wanted exuberant, billowing mixed plantings to explode out of this fairly formal geometric plan. I also wanted to use colour in very precise ways. The Outer Sanctum and the Skinny Vista largely feature classic pastel shades, although in answer to Vita's White Garden, Stonecrop's Black Garden can be found there as well. For the Inner Sanctum, our *pièce de résistance*, I decided to use all colours of the rainbow, including those occasionally thought difficult to harmonise, like magenta and orange. I hoped it would be engagingly lighthearted and justify (perhaps selfishly) the use of a dizzying array of plants. With our hessian-and-salt-hay Miss Jekyll keeping an eye out for mistakes, a colour scheme was developed for each bed that complements its neighbours and, tapestry-like, creates a harmonious whole. Repetition of certain plants in both the Outer and Inner Sanctums unifies the larger Flower Garden by creating ribbons of like effects, what we think of as horticultural moments. These include early spring bulbs, and – ranging from summer into autumn – iris, roses, lilies, daylilies, salvias, dahlias, chrysanthemums, grasses, and autumn colour.

In designing these and similar gardens, I think of permanent plantings and fillers. Permanent plantings – trees, shrubs, roses, vines, some long-lived bulbs, and a variety of perennials and grasses – give structure to individual beds. Spaces between the permanent plantings are filled with annuals, vines, tropicals, sub-tropicals, bulbs, and summer tubers like dahlias. Creating a lush and decidedly out-of-the ordinary feel, many of these filler plants extend the season in the Flower Garden to our first frost and beyond. While in spring we eagerly check to see what has survived winter in the garden, the most distinctive summer task is to distribute our myriad filler plants in the Flower Garden. To supply these, Stonecrop has an extensive propagation programme, growing a vast number of plants from cuttings and seed (much of it collected on site). Tender



and half-hardy perennials are overwintered in a network of poly tunnels, production greenhouses, and cold frames.

While the colour scheme and the permanent plants are just that, permanent, there can be remarkable variation in the way each bed looks based upon which fillers are placed where. Carefully working bed by bed, notes and photographs from previous years are consulted. Not all winters being equal even under glass, fillers are examined for overall appearance and health before being approved for use. Typical planting design criteria are also employed, so candidates are evaluated for performance, aesthetic and other sensory qualities and the way they relate to each other. Such questions should include are the colours the same and the texture or scale wildly different, or vice versa? Can the entire plant be appreciated at a distance, or does it invite close inspection? Naturally, artistic licence is also involved. Putting it all together, I would describe this process as I often have to interns: 'It's a feel thing'. While that might not be the clear, easy-to-follow answer some seek, it is the truth. Planting design is a skill that can be developed by evaluating other gardens, ones you like and, well, other ones, and being willing to take risks.

We start with the hardiest plants, many of them large specimens used as anchors, and go forward. In rough order of appearance, these are *Fuchsia* 'Mrs Popple,' *Persicaria microcephala* 'Red Dragon,' *Strobilanthes maculatus*, *Brugmansia*, *Abutilon*, *Leonotis leonurus*, *Tibouchina urvilleana*, and hardy bananas. Widespread use of the unassuming *Helichrysum petiolare* creates a steady rhythm. Then come the more delicate cupheas, tender salvias, dahlias, crocosmias, gladioli, acidantheras, and hedychiums. Some of the latter, including *H. coronarium* with its heavenly fragrance, can easily be left in their pots and moved in, out and around the beds as needed, just as Gertrude Jekyll did, especially with lilies.

Once these have had some time to settle in we start filling gaps in the Flower Garden with plants such as coleus, chrysanthemums, and *Asclepius curassavica* that we've grown from cuttings, and others we have grown from seed. Some of our favourites in the latter category include *Cynoglossum amabile* 'Mystery Rose,' *Alonsoa meridionalis*

‘Ember Glow,’ *Coreopsis tinctoria*, and a variety of snapdragons. More favourites at Stonecrop include the ‘Rocket’ series, plants reaching upwards of three feet in a great range of colours, and an old cultivar, *Antirrhinum majus* ‘Black Prince,’ with dark leaves and deep crimson flowers. If folklore bears any truth, snapdragons will also protect us from witchcraft.

We rely upon a number of plants that self-seed, especially in the Flower Garden. With judicious edits, these fortuitous additions can be just what are needed even in the most carefully wrought plan. I adore *Perilla frutescens* (shiso), which adds a bold note of colour and texture throughout the season. I prefer the varieties with luminous maroon leaves. If, like Miss Willmott, I were to secretly sprinkle seeds in other gardens, this would undoubtedly be my ‘ghost’. That said, we make ample use of the green-leafed varieties, and plant flat- and frilled-leafed types in both hues. Other self-sowers – these welcome for their floral display – include *Nigella damascena* (love-in-a-mist) and *Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy). Best-in-show in this group of persistent fillers is Himalayan impatiens, *Impatiens glandulifera* ‘Alba’. Covered in white flowers, they have great presence, reaching more than eight feet high each season and thriving well into autumn. Our garden is enclosed, enabling us to control this plant carefully. It can, however, become invasive as each plant produces up to eight hundred seeds a season that spread around the parent plant when the seed capsules explode. I don’t suggest naturalising with it. We have had some rather lucky crosses arise with our self-seeding population. A favourite is *Nicotiana* ‘Stonecrop Mauve’, which grows true from seed, and is offered for sale in limited quantities.

Like so many gardeners, I can find it hard to give up old friends. At the south end of the Inner Sanctum, towards the Potting Shed, was a cruciform layout of *Tilia cordata* meticulously trained in cat’s-cradle fashion. These lindens were grown from seed by Frank Cabot and gave welcome shade, structure, and visual interest. However, as they declined, requiring ever more maintenance, I reluctantly decided to remove them in stages. While a signature garden feature disappeared, the various beds and adjacent grass paths at that end

of the garden have flourished in the new-found sun. In the last few years, several beds in the Inner Sanctum have also been removed. While we lost some desirables, including our grey and purple-and-orange squares, the overall garden is improved. Over time, the beds had become densely planted and very tall, and were packed tightly in the high fenced enclosure. While this was my desired effect, it had become difficult to view the garden with any sense of perspective on the whole. By opening up the space a bit, individual plants and plant combinations as well as the overall design could again be enjoyed. Similarly, navigating the Inner Sanctum became easier when one could better understand the entire space. Such major steps can be difficult, but they also keep a garden fresh and engaging.

The maintenance regime, not surprisingly, is complex at Stonecrop, particularly in the Flower Garden. To control flowering time and reduce (but not eliminate) the need for staking, many perennials and certain annuals are regularly cut back by a third to a half several times during the season. This will often produce a second flush of blooms. While this treatment is not uncommon now, I was certainly among the first to practice it regularly here in the United States. We are careful to deadhead certain plants, ensuring a continuum of bloom, controlling excess seeding, and keeping them looking vital. As beds become more dense, secateurs are used to shape the garden's appearance by clipping away one plant that covers another, or simply adjusting the visual balance between plants. Weeding is a major concern in the spring FG, when more soil is bare, but as the beds fill up, it becomes less so. In my opinion, everything starts with the soil. Twenty years ago all of the beds in the Flower Garden were double-dug, incorporating composted horse manure from the stable Anne Cabot allows me to share. These beds are now mulched every two or three years with more horse manure that has been run through our purpose-built cooker to kill weed seeds. This maintains good soil structure and fertility. As a result, we never need to apply additional fertilisers. I can't speak for the plants, but with all of the planting and replanting we do, I can assure you that sinking a spade into this soil that is soft as butter makes all the difference.

Watering is another major undertaking during Stonecrop summers, due to extreme heat (which can reach above 100°F), drought, or both. Fortunately, even on our rocky hilltop, our dowsers-cum-well-driller has been able to sink three massive wells – two run at 65 gallons per minute and one at 100 gpm – and assorted smaller ones, so the staff stay busy with myriad hose pipes and sprinklers. This year already looks dubious. The past winter was one of the driest in years, with record-setting high temperatures. To give a sense of the climatic vagaries at Stonecrop, the first day this year higher than 90°F was 16 April. Early bulbs and late bulbs and flowering trees all burst forth together. Three weeks later, there was a hard freeze at 26°F, evidence of why we plan for the end of May as the last frost date. While the high summer temperatures in this part of upstate New York have some drawbacks, this same heat and abundant sun make many plants relatively easy to grow. Perennials that are staples here, many ornamental grasses and the robust, wildly fragrant *Clematis ternifolia* (sweet autumn clematis) seldom bloom in the cool English summers.

While we have dawdled in Stonecrop's Flower Garden, there are many summer highlights in other parts of the garden. Some of the very best are shrubs and vines. Beginning, no surprise, in the Flower Garden, stand-out shrubs include the choice *Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group, with large velvety grey leaves and near-opalescent lace-caps; *Philadelphus coronarius* 'Aureus', and *Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea' – the purple filbert in our Black Garden. Two of the best vines in the FG include *Humulus lupulus* 'Aureus' – the golden hop, of which I can never get enough – and *Vitis coignetiae*, that we call the crimson glory vine, handsome and vigorous throughout the season with deep crimson-purple, brilliant scarlet, and fiery orange autumn hues. A treasured shrub Rosemary Verey taught me to love is *Buddleja alternifolia* 'Argentea', with decidedly arching branches of silver leaves and lavender inflorescences.

We rely heavily on shrub roses throughout the gardens, with superb examples of *Rosa glauca*, *R. villosa*, *R. nutkana*, *R. 'Cantabrigiensis'* and all members of the terrifically hardy Canadian Explorer series of rugosas. Appropriately enough for our location above the Hudson

River, with just a bit of deadheading *Rosa rugosa* 'Henry Hudson' is always covered in spice-scented white flowers, lush dark green foliage, and magnificent fruit.

Clematis is another favourite. Topping the list might be *Clematis viticella* 'Betty Corning', with prolific and fragrant pale lavender bells summer to autumn. The rich blue *C. × durandii* always takes me back to Rosemary Verey's Barnsley House, where it wove through an ornate dark blue fence in the Pond Garden. At Stonecrop, I've planted it with laburnum in homage to my mentor. Some other clematis combinations we prefer are the huge yet delicate soft blue flowers of *C. 'Mrs Cholmondeley'*, which complement the very fragrant, white-flowered *Wisteria sinensis* 'Jacko', while on the fiery side, yellow *C. tangutica* 'Helios' brilliantly partners the fragrant golden-apricot climbing rose 'Autumn Sunset'.

A few choice shrubs native to the US include *Cotinus obovatus*, the American smokewood, *Calycanthus floridus* (Carolina allspice), with red-brown flowers giving off an unforgettable spicy scent, *Viburnum cassinoides* (withe-rod), which performs throughout the year and bears long-lasting pink-red and blue-black berries, *Diervilla lonicera*, the bush honeysuckle, dotted with terminal, sulfur-yellow flowers – an excellent groundcoverer, even in dry shade, and *Clethra acuminata*, boasting a fragrant white summer bloom and an attractive tiered structure. Very good near-natives at Stonecrop include *Rhus typhina* 'Dissecta', a fern-leafed version of staghorn sumac, and *Aesculus × carnea* 'Briotii', a red horse chestnut with rich red flowers.

There are several other shrubs which I don't believe we could live without: *Clerodendrum trichotomum* or harlequin glory bower, a shrub with a divine scent (unless you crush the leaves) covered with delicate white flowers in late summer and then even more spectacularly, with persistent bright blue berries held in brilliant fleshy-red calyces, *Clethra barbinervis*, the Japanese clethra, which has long, slightly drooping, creamy terminal racemes and smooth almost muscular grey bark that exfoliates to shades of red-brown, and *Pseudocdonia sinensis*, the Chinese quince, that in addition to the delight of its flowers and fruit, has superb exfoliating bark very much like a stewartia. Nor must I skip *Tripterygium regelii*,

Regel's threewingnut, a scandent shrub that with proper support can reach thirty feet, its vine-like branches crowned in large, airy, fragrant greenish-white panicles in late summer. A favourite of twentieth-century American designer Beatrix Farrand, it still grows up walls at Dumbarton Oaks, her masterwork in Washington, DC. A fine, non-invasive bittersweet relative, it is rare and well worth searching for.

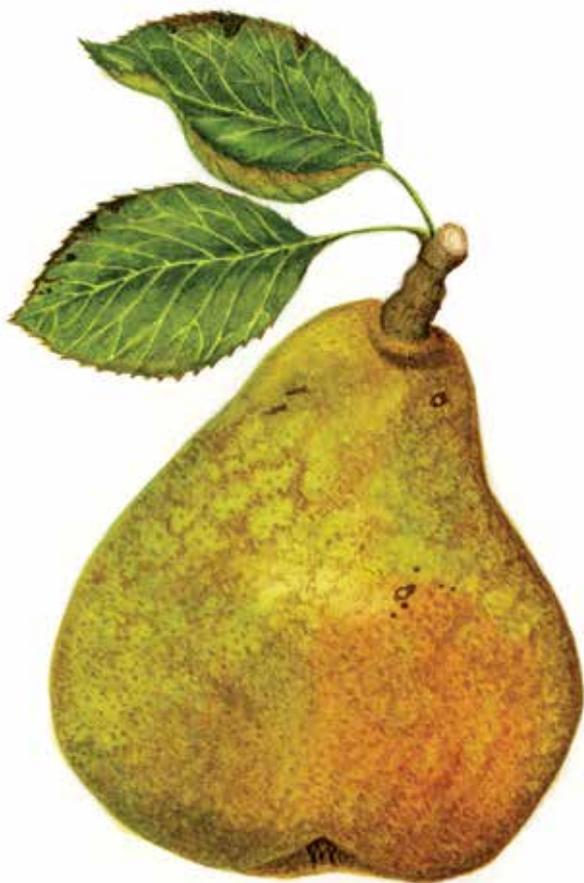
Once again, this glimpse of Stonecrop has been limited. I hope, however, that you have gleaned a sense of our approach to planting and design, and a taste of our wide-ranging collection. Autumn marks the true peak for many of our gardens and ushers in the brilliant colouring for which the north-eastern United States is justly famous. I look forward to welcoming you back soon.

Once again I am indebted to Kate Kerin for marshalling my thoughts and helping me to prepare this article for publication.

Garden plan by Simon Dorrell.

HORTUS

No. 103 AUTUMN 2012



Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Spring, New York

PART THREE: AUTUMN

CAROLINE BURGESS

Autumn in New York. Although the jazz standard celebrates the streets of Manhattan, Stonecrop's rural hilltop is just as inviting (if not more so) this season. Here, the glories of autumn in the north-eastern United States illuminate the garden, our many half-hardy and tender plants reach their long-season peak, and we host our favourite event, the annual members' garden party. It is a brilliant if fleeting moment.

A defining feature at Stonecrop is the sense of camaraderie among our members and friends. Frank Cabot – one of our founders – liked to call this the Stonecrop Family, thinking it distinguished this public garden from so many others, with events designed to encourage a special relationship. In just its sixth year, the alpine plant sale we host each April with the North American Rock Garden Society brings hundreds of like-minded enthusiasts (if that is a strong enough word for these rock gardeners!) together from tremendous distances, including Canada. At the intimate evening garden walks we hold throughout the year, visitors and staff explore a particular section of the garden, discuss individual plants in detail, and sometimes retire for a sip of wine at the end. Impromptu conversations often blossom in our tea shop, Café Cycas. Nothing, however, captures the personality of the Stonecrop Family better than our garden party.

Held over the second weekend in September, the Stonecrop Garden Party is the culmination of months of work and growth in the garden, and months of study (and growth) by our interns and staff. It is also a decidedly light-hearted affair, much like the Cotswold village fêtes of my youth and the annual wheelbarrow races we had when I was a student at Kew. Guests are greeted with an array of games, including such classics as Lucky Dip and Guess-the-Weight-of-the-Marrow (or squash as Americans call it), as well as

our recently devised Gnome Hunt. While few children attend, participants can be remarkably competitive. Every intern and staff member at Stonecrop prepares an independent project over the summer. Past topics include 'European Wild Flowers Naturalised in the US', 'Bogs and Barrens: A Brief Look at the Unique Maritime Plant Community of Atlantic Nova Scotia' and for a reorganisational project now underway, 'Provisional Plan for the Systematic Order Beds by Phylogenetic Tree'. Displayed in the Conservatory, guests can enjoy tea there during the party while studying the intellectual fruits of our labour. Various flavoured fruits of our labour do, indeed, abound (we will get to the garden shortly), but first the event's other highlight: the raffle. Once again, all of Stonecrop's interns and staff contribute and there are typically more than a hundred prizes. To enable guests to take a bit of Stonecrop home with them we offer some of our choicest plants and plant collections, alpine troughs, as well as our own various soil mixes and helpings of our much-coveted homemade compost. We are lucky to have a crew with myriad other creative skills, so one might find bird houses, trellises, wind-chimes made from Stonecrop-grown bamboo, and edibles like our *Cornus mas* jam – all contributed to advance 'the cause' and make the day truly splendid and memorable.

In our early years as a public garden, the only time we labelled plants in any significant way was for the garden party. Now, we create keyed plant lists for smaller sections of the garden each week, but the September list – keyed to about six hundred and fifty plants – is still cause for excitement, even among our most frequent visitors. Guests set off with pencils at the ready and list clutched in hand. To give just a taste of the late season treats at Stonecrop, what follows are some stand-out autumn plants and plant combinations.

In the Flower Garden, this is the shining moment for many of what we think of as 'filler' plants (discussed in our summer article), the already mentioned half-hardy and tender plants we set amid a framework of permanent plantings (perennials, shrubs and vines). Gazing around the Inner Sanctum, the central portion of the Flower Garden where the network of beds is organised in colour

schemes spanning the rainbow, it is difficult to create a concise list of favourites.

With its limited colour palette, the White Bed relies heavily on form, scale and texture. An exemplary plant is *Sambucus nigra* 'Pulverulenta', the mottled elder with white-and-green-splashed leaves, in front of *Clematis hexapetala* draped over a wooden tuteur and covered now in feathery grey seedheads, with the large, pendent white flowers of *Brugmansia* × *candida* hanging above and perfuming the surrounding air.

A fine specimen of *Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum Group' dominates the Peach Bed. Its sword-like leaves rise up behind *Carex comans* 'Bronze Perfection' – clumps of very narrow, arching leaves of rich brown sugar that I think of as Tina Turner's signature hair colour. The carex is interplanted with several choice items. Native to the mountains of Arizona and New Mexico, *Agastache rupestris* is spectacular, sturdy and widely adaptable. Flowering from mid-summer well into autumn, it has salvia-like spikes of burnt-orange flowers emerging from dusky plum-hued calyces, all held above fine, grey-green and aromatic foliage. Its tender companions are also long blooming and floriferous. Take *Alonsoa meridionalis*, the mask flower, for example. It offers three solid months of deep orange blooms, while *Fuchsia* 'Koralle' is never without its tubular coral bells. Working with tones of a single colour, even including its brightest forms, this combination is surprisingly subtle. A similar effect could be achieved by using these plants in containers.

In contrast, the theme is decidedly hot and bold in what we call the ROY Bed (red, orange and yellow). Dahlias reign throughout the late season Flower Garden. The star combination here is anchored by the bronzy orange flowers of *Dahlia* 'Gingeroo', with the tight, almost spherical shape of all Formal Decorative dahlias, and *D.* 'Sunshine', a single waterlily variety with deep gold flowers set around brilliant orange centres that pop against their blackish-purple foliage. Pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans* 'Golden Delicious', adds intense chartreuse foliage and delicate sprays of scarlet flowers. Blending in a froth of constant bloom are the clusters of tiny red, orange and yellow flowers that top the tender *Asclepias*

curassavica; the deep red-orange tassel flowers (similar in shape to *D. 'Gingeroo'*) floating on the wiry stems of *Emilia javanica*; and *Cuphea 'David Verity'* with small, tubular deep orange flowers tipped in flared yellow ends. Reaching up to six feet in height are the towering stems of lion's ear (*Leonotis leonurus*) – a South African native we love – that give structure to this combination, stealing the show each autumn when it is covered in tiered whorls of fuzzy orange, slightly arching tubular flowers.

In the Red Rainbow, a semi-circular bed close to the potting shed, one foolproof combination uses the bold, palmately-lobed purple-bronze foliage of *Ricinus communis 'New Zealand Black'* with the tall spires covered in wine red flowers of perennial *Lobelia × speciosa 'Ruby Slippers'*, the upright *Salvia splendens 'Van-Houttei'*, bearing rich burgundy, hooded flowers spaced along ten-inch inflorescences. Dividing this grouping is a large colourful mass of *Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea 'Atropurpurea'*, a lovely neighbour for the tall spires of *Salvia confertiflora*, with its long, narrow racemes of tiny, red-orange flowers snug in velvety brown calyces over large, roughly textured green leaves. In front is dahlia 'Japanese Bishop', an orange-red Colletterte type with black foliage, surrounded by spikes of *Crococsmia 'Lucifer'* and the groundcover of *Salvia coccinea 'Lady in Red'* and the multi-coloured *Solenostemon 'Tabasco'* with a colourful edging of *Houttuynia cordata 'Chameleon'*. Sunglasses *de rigueur!*

As mentioned in a previous article, the sun and heat that keep our sprinklers running throughout the summer do yield some horticultural rewards, particularly evident in the Grass Garden and the pools and pond of the Rock Ledge. In the late summer and autumn, ornamental grasses of every description burst into bloom and in some the foliage colour changes dramatically over several weeks. While excellent varieties abound at Stonecrop, our native grasses are also well worth mentioning. Some favourites include broom sedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), which turns golden yellow at this season, sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) with flat, pendent seedheads that flutter in the slightest breeze and which mature from green to purple bronze as the foliage becomes copper-coloured.

Then there's *Hystrix patula* (sometimes called *Elymus hystrix*, or porcupine grass), with distinctive inflorescences held high above the foliage that resemble sparsely bristled bottlebrushes – thus the common name. The latter two grasses are useful as they thrive in full sun or part shade.

Our intense summer weather transforms Stonecrop's Rock Ledge. With an impressive alpine moment in the spring, the autumn focus is on aquatic plants, including many tender selections that grace the pools on the ledge and the lake below. While potentially invasive, *Ludwigia hexapetala*, the mosaic plant, is controlled by being confined to one pool where it forms a lush mat covered in yellow flowers. Only in bloom is it easy to understand why this is a member of the Onagraceae family. Another treasure is *Aponogeton distachyos*, the water hawthorn, with unusual white flowers that lift above the water surface and emit the best of perfumes.

In my opinion, some of the best autumn colours are the pinkish tan-to-bronze of the dawn redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and the rainbow combination of yellow, orange, red and purple on some of the large shrubs – notably the native *Fothergilla major* and Asian *Disanthus cercidifolius*. A magical contrast appears in autumn when the green leaves of *Acer palmatum* × *koreanum* turn scarlet and are seen partnered with the rigid green leaves of the dwarf bamboo, *Sasa veitchii*, planted below, which acquire a distinctive buff edge. Superb autumn fruits include the red berries of *Ilex serrata*, the orange-red berries of native *Ilex decidua*, the sapphire-blue berries set in raspberry pink calyces of *Clerodendrum trichotomum*, the fat, sausage-like fruit of the semi-evergreen vine, *Akebia quinata*, the brilliant blue and deep red fruit respectively of the native woodlanders *Caulophyllum thalictroides* and *Smilacina racemosa*, not to mention the bright orange pendent drupes of *Viburnum setigerum* 'Aurantiacum,' a plant considered among the best in a genus renowned for its fruit.

Although typically arriving in mid-October, the first frost can come even earlier to our hilltop. As a result, as soon as our garden party is over, we begin to put the garden to bed. First comes the Big Dig, the companion to summer's Operation Flower Garden.

Over six weeks, interns and staff race to lift, pot, and house all of the half-hardy and tender plants that we have spent a full seventeen weeks nurturing in the Flower Garden. As appropriate, plants throughout the garden are cut down and beds mulched. Plastic coverings are put back on the polytunnels, where most of these delicate subjects will spend the coming winter. Conservatory plants that remained potted for their summer display out of doors are brought in on a single day, although the 'picture' is refined over the ensuing months.

It is no small feat to successfully overwinter our massive *Gunnera manicata* without substantial loss in size the following year. To do so, we cut off the leaves (which can reach six feet across), wrap the crown in frost-protection fabric, place the large, purpose-built wooden box lined with sheets of silvered foam insulation around the crown, set out slug and mouse bait as well as a max/min thermometer, fill the box with bags of insulating packing peanuts and cover with its insulated wooden lid. The entire box-surround is then covered in wood chips to provide further insulation. This prehistoric beauty adds tremendous presence when it re-awakes, rendering more than worthwhile this arduous yearly ritual.

At the start of November in most parts of the garden, we begin planting tens of thousands of bulbs, often more than thirty thousand annually. To avoid widespread damage, bulbs are planted in the Woodland Garden when the dense groundcover of choice perennials is still visible. This is the culmination of long effort. Earlier in the year, bulb displays are evaluated. Needed items are then ordered, painstakingly organised by type and specific planting location, and stored appropriately. Bulb planting should be completed early in case of that early deep freeze. However, if we're unlucky we literally need to use a pickaxe to chip away the frozen earth, swaddled in warm winter clothes. Even then, like the gunnera, these sleeping beauties give us much joy to anticipate.

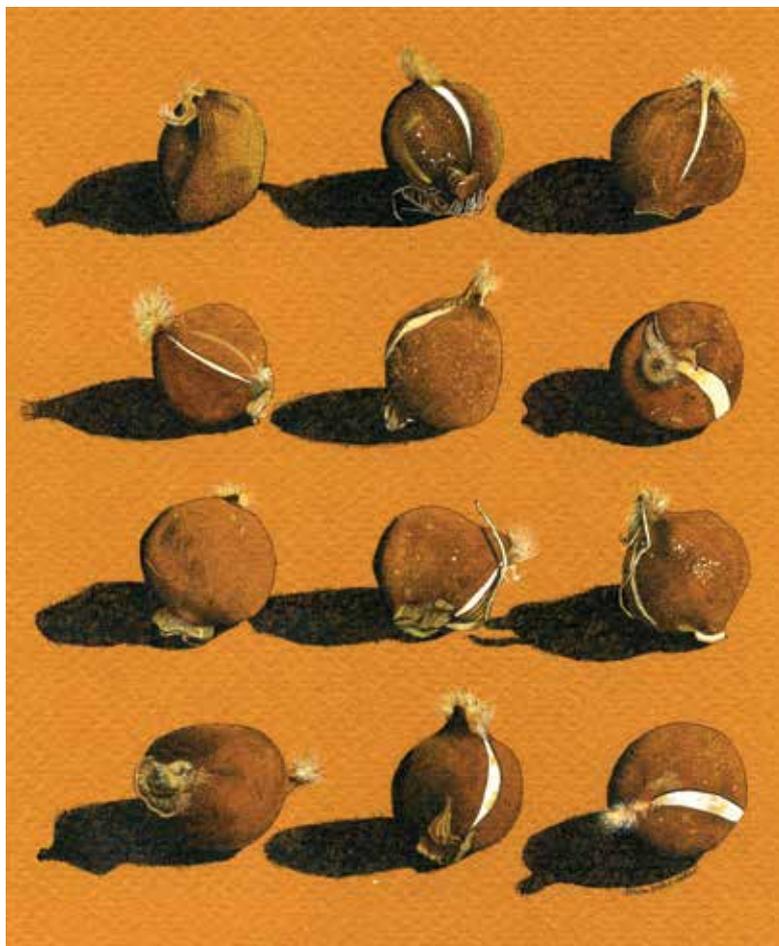
Like the song, autumn at Stonecrop is filled with heady pleasures and just that touch of melancholia that makes this short-lived season all the more sweet. In the pages of *HORTUS*, you have now followed the Stonecrop Gardens and the Stonecrop Family from

early spring, through summer and into autumn. As we all begin to dream of the first signs of next year's spring again, I look forward to bringing you inside our Potting Shed and our Conservatory to share the hidden pleasures of our winter months.

Again I'd like to thank Kate Kerin for her help in preparing this article for publication.

HORTUS

No. 104 WINTER 2012



Stonecrop Gardens, Cold Spring, New York

PART FOUR: WINTER

CAROLINE BURGESS

Like temperate gardens everywhere, Stonecrop turns inward during the winter months, particularly as it is closed to the public from November to March. Aside from dealing with snowstorms and power failures, our chores fall into a steady, satisfying rhythm as we wrap up one year in the garden and prepare for the next. This is also the time when our School of Practical Horticulture takes centre stage. As mentioned in our first HORTUS article last spring, this school is the realisation of a dream shared by Stonecrop's founders, Frank and Anne Cabot, and myself. Now in its twentieth year, we continue to train individuals to know, grow and use plants. We provide workshops for gardeners of all levels throughout the year, as well as a summer internship for a high-school student co-sponsored by our local garden club, but our focus is on one- and two-year internships that are primarily for students pursuing careers in professional horticulture.

Aged eighteen to well beyond, our interns have come to us from across the United States and from as far away as China, with a wide array of backgrounds. All have varying degrees of hands-on horticultural experience, and almost all have university degrees, ranging from horticulture and landscape architecture, to studio art, education, and geology (the latter is now a confirmed Alpinist). After Stonecrop, they have gone on to work at major public and private gardens, farms and nurseries, garden publications and design firms, and to pursue additional professional training and degrees.

The Stonecrop internship runs from late January or early February until the week before Christmas. Occasionally, individuals are invited to stay for an additional year, often with a specialised focus. Although we have living accommodation in our purpose-built Gatehouse for six interns, we typically admit half that many students to allow for extensive one-on-one instruction. Most applications

arrive in September or October, and we typically schedule a two-day working interview before the holidays. The internship programme begins with an intensive six weeks, learning the plant collection (primarily that portion under glass) and horticultural skills that include greenhouse management and plant propagation. Interns are also provided with a stipend and participate in most aspects of garden maintenance and public garden management, take study tours, and complete various independent projects. While making ready for the incoming class, we are also working with our current interns to complete the programme and help plan their next steps. In November and December, regardless of the weather, interns finish planting more than forty thousand bulbs, double-dig the vegetable plots they designed and maintained throughout the season, and – once the entire garden is cleaned up and mulched with (depending on the area) wood chips, leaf mould, or composted manure – they turn their attention to chores within the potting shed and prepare for their final exam in December. Graduation comes with a festive luncheon that signals the start of a well-deserved if brief period of work at a slower pace for all involved. Interns take away their hard-earned Stonecrop certificates, pots of bulbs, and some good English hand tools to help ease them into the next chapter of their horticultural lives.

A winter task that is near and dear to my heart is the cleaning of seeds that we collect throughout the year. In both my first and third years as a student at Kew, I spent three months in the seed room, so I place a high value on seeds and their dissemination, and view their cleaning as an annual rite of passage. Although the equipment was much more technical at Kew, at Stonecrop we use the same basic techniques of threshing, soaking, sieving and hand-separating. While much of the seed is used in this garden to ensure the continuity and purity of our own collections, a limited quantity is made available to our members and the public at large through our *Index Seminum* and *Index Rarium*. This programme is a true labour of love. We include more than seven hundred plant varieties described in careful detail and annotated with quotes from various (opinionated) garden writers we admire: Graham Stuart Thomas,

E. A. Bowles and Will Ingwersen. Recently, we have added photographs of our selections. Available on our website and updated each winter, these lists serve as fine general references as well as being a source for choice garden seeds.

Another sentimental winter chore is the chitting of potatoes. My mentor, Rosemary Verey, would get her certified seed potatoes from Scotland in January. As a child and beyond, working at Barnsley House, I would help her put them to chit in trays in the gunroom. Ours come from Maine, but we use the same kind of chitting trays and an identical process. Likewise, Rosemary and I would start seeds in January. As there wasn't room in her two small greenhouses, we rigged up lights and heat mats in her cellar. It was always somehow miraculous when tiny seedlings appeared in this subterranean setting, and we kept detailed records of when each variety did what, just as we do at Stonecrop. Rosemary – RV to my CB – was always coming up with ingenious solutions, embodying the notion that 'It is a sin to be dull'. For me, and I imagine my fellow staffers and our interns, seed-sowing and chitting continue to be acknowledgements that a new garden season is nearly underway.

On our hilltop, winter weather is utterly unpredictable. Last year, we had sixteen inches of snow in a late October storm, and very little snow thereafter. This October's mild weather was washed out with Hurricane Sandy's wind and rain. Average lows hover at or below 20°F, and in some years we can have more than forty inches of snow. This means that the winters aren't always peaceful, which was a shock when I arrived in the US. I had never before had to add snow removal to my winter repertoire. At Stonecrop, we often spend days at a time clearing it from roads, and we must also keep the greenhouses from collapsing under excess weight, particularly if the snow is wet. Our rewards include cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, more time in the library (which grew around the Cabots' extensive collection of garden books), and group dinners that typically feature fruit and veg from the garden and game from the grounds. I have just finished making three-citrus marmalade with the interns, using Buddha's Hands

(*Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis*), Meyer lemons (*Citrus* × *meyeri*), and trifoliolate oranges (*Poncirus trifoliata*) – a delicacy that will surely brighten our winter table.

The quiet that a heavy snowfall brings to the garden is extraordinary, and the brilliant white sets off the coloured bark of various cornus and willow species, including the brilliant *Cornus alba* ‘Ruby’, the crisp yellow-green *Cornus sericea* ‘Flaviramea’, and the showiest willows: *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* ‘Britzensis’ (the aptly-named coral bark) and two violet willows, *S. daphnoides* and the bluestem willow, *Salix irrorata*, a North American native which boasts stunning silvery-lavender winter twigs. Many of the fruiting shrubs and ornamental grasses discussed in previous articles contribute to our winter garden, but during these coldest months, the real glories are found under glass.

The Alpine House in winter is filled with tiny irresistible gems – a sea of blue *Lithodora rosmarinifolia* and the paler *L. oleifolia* surround an enviable array of ancient drabas and saxifragas, including the encrusted *S. federici-augusti* subsp. *grisebachii*, that grows wild on the slopes of Mount Olympus. A favourite of mine is the vigorous *Hepatica transsilvanica* ‘Elison Spence’, covered in rich, mid-blue double flowers with an inner ruff of petals much like some of the newer Japanese varieties. Other charmers include the tight, green rosettes of *Petrocosmea forrestii*, which in the best-grown examples form a spectacular spiral; the charming pink or white flowers of *Lithobryagma parviflorum*, the woodland star, native to the north-western United States; *Rupicapnos africana*, which looks like a tiny corydalis with silver-blue foliage and white blossoms tipped in purple; and *Ozothamnus selago*, a petite New Zealand shrublet clothed in scale-like leaves that looks like delicate green branched coral.

The winter perfume of *Daphne odora* and *D. bholua* fill the Pit House, where we keep collections of cyclamen, primula, dwarf bulbs (like our eagerly awaited *Narcissus viridiflorus* with its highly fragrant spidery blossoms in a remarkable emerald shade), heliobores, and fritillaries (including the delicate pink *Fritillaria stenanthera* and the larger, greenish-white *F. bucharica*). At Christ-

mas I treat myself by cutting hellebores for the table. They remind me of holidays spent at Kew, when I always worked for the extra money and the excuse to be in London. Rupert Goldby, a friend and fellow student and I would celebrate with a walk through the Woodland Garden where the Christmas roses always seemed to bloom on schedule.

The Conservatory is our winter garden, with each wing of the large, cross-shaped structure guarding its own treasures. The 'South Con' is the main area, housing the bulk of what we take outside each summer and which features South African bulbs such as a host of bright lachenalia, the Cape cowslip. The central section accommodates two wonderful and wonderfully fragrant winter-blooming buddlejas: orange *B. × lewisiana* and white *B. asiatica*. The Conservatory's North Wing is awash in camellias, while the East Wing is decidedly Mediterranean, hosting our collection of rose-maries, various olives, *Spartium junceum* (Spanish broom) and *Coronilla valentina* subsp. *glauca* (the glaucous scorpion vetch) – both a glorious clear yellow, and the magnificent blue spikes of *Echium candicans*, or pride of Madeira.

While we have long held a late winter tea (Spring Under Glass) for Stonecrop members, we wanted to share our treasures more broadly, so several years ago started our Spring Under Glass Week. More colourful and more fragrant than the famed Fashion Week in New York City, the public are invited to explore Stonecrop's display houses before the gardens open and be transported from the chill grey quotidian of a north-eastern winter. With list in hand, visitors can view more than six hundred note-worthy plants and observe our various techniques and stages of plant propagation, from seed-sowing and pricking-out, stem cuttings on the mist benches, butterfly leaf-cuttings of streptocarpus, to postage-stamp and vein-slashing leaf-cuttings of begonias. For us, Spring Under Glass is the perfect way to mark the end of winter, for the garden soon re-opens and our own Ring Cycle begins again.

In writing about Stonecrop through the seasons, I have been reminded of what I find important. It is deeply gratifying that we regularly grow plants that should not be hardy in our location or

that are notoriously difficult to propagate, but it is also rewarding to follow our interns over the years, some of whom continue to be involved here as consultants and volunteers. While we strive to be a garden for plant enthusiasts, and to train professional horticulturists of the highest order, Stonecrop would not be what it is without the Stonecrop family – its students, staff, members and visitors. Just as I carry memories of gardens and gardeners I have known, the Cabots and I always dreamed that some part of what we do in Cold Spring inspires members of this family in their own gardening lives. I hope that you will visit us and find *your* Stonecrop story.

Thanks again to Kate Kerin for her help in preparing this article.