



Plant Hunting in the Northern Mountains of Vietnam

By Andrew Bunting

In the fall of 2013, I joined fellow plant hunters, Dan Hinkley, Ozzie Johnson and Scott McMahan for a collecting trip in the northern mountains of Vietnam. I had joined Dan, Ozzie and Scott the year before on a collecting trip to Tawian and had collected once prior to that trip in Sichuan, China. I was honored to be joining this team of “seasoned” collectors. This team has been on approximately 10 expeditions together to Vietnam on other occasions and to China several times. And, Dan Hinkley is arguably the most celebrated plant explorer in the last 100 years with dozens of collecting trips under his belt including Japan, Korea, China, Myanmar, Nepal, Sikkim, Turkey, South Africa, Chile, Costa Rica. He has been to both China and Vietnam over 10 times!

Months of planning, correspondences and fundraising had come to a close and we met in Hanoi in early October. We took an old Russian night train out of Hanoi and headed north towards the mountainous village of Sapa in Lao Cai Province in the northwest region of Vietnam. This has become an increasingly popular destination for European trekkers attracted to the steep peaks of the Fansipan (Fanxipan) which reach over 10,000' in elevation.

Upon our arrival in Sapa we were met by Dan's trusty guide, Uoc, whom Dan has been using on every trip since his first trip in the late '90s.

For this trip we had developed a list of targeted genera which included *Hedychium*, *Polygonatum*, *Arisaema*, *Begonia*, *Acer*, *Schefflera*, *Illicium*, *Rhododendron*, *Viburnum*, *Clematis*, *Hydrangea*, *Rhodoleia*, *Holboellia*, *Daphniphyllum* and *Magnolia*. Prior to leaving several of us had spent a day with Richard Figlar at his garden in Pickens, South Carolina differentiating the possible magnolia species we might find in northern Vietnam based on a botanical key developed by Dick that separated out the species by the stipular scar on the petiole. In total, we made 20 different seed collections of magnolias including, *M. foveolata*, *M. floribunda*, *M. cathcartii*, *M. sapaensis* (endemic to that area), *M. martini*, *M. championii*, *M. insignis* and low elevations species, *M. bailonii*.

We also had some conservation targets for this trip. We wanted to document locations of the incredibly rare and recently discovered, *Xanthocypris vietnamensis*, as well as, the *Taxus* relative, *Amentotaxus hatuyenensis*. We were also hopeful to recollect the softball-sized fruits of *Aesculus wangii*.

On the morning of October 5th we gathered our gear and all our collecting supplies and met Uoc, 4 porters and local guide and headed into the Five Fingers mountain range. We hiked for few hours through agricultural fields and remnant,



Photo by Andrew Bunting

Sapa, Vietnam – Five Fingers Range



lower elevation, subtropical flora such as *Luculia* and *Oxyropsa*. As we walked the terrain became steeper and increasingly hard to navigate. At 6,000' the recognizable flora of *Hydrangea*, *Cornus*, *Acer*, etc., began to appear. On any collecting trip one of the goals is to collect at higher elevations, especially in predominantly subtropical countries like Vietnam and Taiwan. In theory, the higher the elevation it is collected the more inherent hardiness it will have. We continued to climb in elevation on narrow paths cut by the cardamom farmers who use the understory as fertile site for growing their crop. We collected *Magnolia foveolata* at 6,843'. This evergreen magnolia has a golden idumentum. Introductions have been made to the U. S. including one that has been given the cultivar name 'Shibamichi'. On the hike we found the



Photo by Andrew Bunting

Magnolia foveolata

fruits of the *Styrax* relative, *Rhederodendron* sp. and the vining member of the *Lardizabalaceae*, *Holboellia* aff. *brachyandra*. We spent the night in the jungle.

On the morning of the 6th we began a trek that took us up a steep razorback ridge with sheer drops on either side. Shortly after the trek began it began raining. Around 11am we reached the pass of the Five Finger Mountain range at 8,220'. On the other side we traversed very deep terrain bush whacking through bamboo. Around 2pm in the pouring rain we found shelter in a cardamon processing shelter. From here our fortunes quickly changed for the worse. Our local guide got disoriented and we began traversing the valley making steep climbs to the river below and then steep climbs through the jungle. The more traverses we made the more we got lost. As darkness set on the jungle we set up camp with no water or supplies. We were lost! During the trek of the day we were able to collect *Magnolia* aff. *floribunda*, *Magnolia cathcartii*, the endemic, *Magnolia sapaensis* and *Disporopsis* sp.

The following day we left camp without a clear direction to safety in mind. The guides thought we would hike only an hour or so to the highway. 6 hours later without any potable water we reached a highway. We did collect several species of *Begonia*, *Ophiopogon* sp., and *Musa* sp.

In the morning of October 9th we started on a trailhead at Ban Quan. Our hope for the day was to find the extremely rare conifer, *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*. We started out on a hot dry path that took us through vegetation with low elevation palms. As we ascended the small knolls we saw a nice mix of conifers including *Cephalotaxus*, *Keeteleria*, *Podocarpus*, as well as, *Mabonia* aff. *duclouxiana* and *Aucuba omeiensis*. At the top of one of the knolls we found a bedraggled specimen of the *Xanthocyparis*.



Photo by Andrew Bunting

Uoc collecting *Magnolia foveolata*



After lunch we continued down the Bait Dan San side of the range and hiked through terraced fields of rice and through primitive Dao villages. At a low elevation along the road we collected cuttings of *Magnolia baillonii*.

On October 10th, we were in search of yet another rare conifer, *Amentotaxus hatuyenensis*. We took an early morning hike from Ban Quan to an area where Ozzie and Scott had collected in 2010. We started hiking a 3,300' up a hot, dry, steep karst trail. At 4,700' at the top of a small mountain we found several specimens at the top of the ridge. We also found *Viburnum sambucinum*, *Hedychium* and we collected *Magnolia insignis* at the entrance to the dirt road at the village of Yan Ming.



Photo by Andrew Bunting

Lunch at base of *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis*.

On the 12th, we decided to “divide and conquer”. Ozzie, Scott and I headed to a promising area to the far northwest. And Dan, with a couple of porters, headed up Fansipan. We spent endless hours driving through degraded areas and in the end did no collecting. Dan, however, had a fruitful trip up the mountain and collected *Ilex*, *Cleyera*, *Sorbus*, *Camellia*, *Viburnum cylindricum*, *Gaultheria fragrantissima*, *Rhodoleia*, *Schefflera* aff. *alpinia*, *Schefflera hoi*, *Hydrangea heteromalla*, *Begonia sizemoreae*, *Lindera*, *Dendropanax*, *Sarcococca coriacea* and several rhododendrons.



Photo by Andrew Bunting

Uoc with *alpinia*

Toward the end of the trip on October 14th Scott and I headed to Ban Quan to visit the impressive grove of the very rare *Aesculus wangii*. In trips past the team had collected softball sized fruits of this Vietnamese horsechestnut. Scott and I spent considerable time combing the ground in search of fruit and found nothing. We surmised that fruiting is probably cyclical (which was proved correct when Dan returned in the fall of 2014 and found seed on the ground).

Back in Sapa, we had several days of processing ahead of us. In total, we made 211 collections. All the seed had to be cleaned, packaged and labeled. From Vietnam, Dan continued on to Myanmar. As soon as we returned to the U. S. planning for subsequent trips was underway. In the fall of 2014, we joined Dr. Donglin Zhang from the University of Georgia to Hubei, China. As I write this article our consortium is planning a scouting trip in June to Arunachal Pradesh and most likely another fall collecting trip to China. ♪

Brian Jackson, March 15 Speaker

Brian Jackson received his B.Sc. in Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, his M.Sc. in Horticulture at Auburn University, and his Ph.D. at Virginia Tech. Dr. Jackson has a teaching/research appointment which includes the instruction of four undergraduate courses.

Jackson specializes in the instruction of four undergraduate organic materials to replace or supplement horticultural potting mixes (substrates) and landscape mulches. Brian is also a full partner in the Horticultural Substrates Laboratory at NCSU which is the largest and most comprehensive academic laboratory for substrates and landscape mulches in the US. ♪

April 18, 2015
Andrew Bunting

“Plant Hunting in Northern Vietnam”

The Scott Arboretum
408 Vassar Ave.
Swarthmore, PA 19081

May 16 Road Trip to the Croatan National Forest

There will be a slight charge (TBD) to cover van rental, as a bus will not be able to negotiate Forest Service roads. To simply planning and to save time, bring your own bag lunch and maybe a folding chair. The chapter provides tea and lemonade.

More about this trip on the back page. Please let me know if you are going as soon as possible for planning purposes.

chas36kid@gmail.com is best. 919-377-2938

2015 NARGS Seed Exchange Wrap-Up

In late December several Board members gathered at Bobby Wilder's home for two days to unpack seeds and begin the complex set-up for pulling and packaging seed orders from all around the globe. Continuing 6 days through January, about 23 volunteers filled 608 orders sending seeds to 14 countries. On February 6, the final day of pulling orders, and

Feb 9, the break down continued with wrapping the surplus seeds to send to the Rocky Mountain Chapter for a second round of disbursement.

A job well done! ♪



Photo by Bobby Ward



Photo by Bobby Ward



Photo by Bobby Ward



Things to Think About As the Gardening Year Begins: Why Don't You . . .

By Steven Whitesell

~ Remember to keep a garden journal this season? One good thing about the endless winter is that it will allow you to start entries at a fairly late date and still not miss any important events. Record bloom times, effective planting combinations, notes for improvement and alteration, notable successes, pest problems, and any other relevant information.

~ Keep a flower diary this season? Having an accurate written record of bloom time will help you track changes over the years and refine plant combinations if you're aiming for a particular bloom sequence and simultaneous bloom in a particular color. It will also help identify lull periods in your garden you can correct by planting new plants that bloom at that idle time.

~ Make a diagram of areas in the garden that need more early-flowering bulbs, now that you're aware of it. When it's time to order bulbs in the fall, you'll have forgotten. Don't forget to order fall-flowering bulbs later in the summer. *Sternbergia lutea* is such a delightful golden surprise in October that you won't want to be without it.

~ Examine the structure of leafless trees and shrubs and take the time to thoroughly prune them to produce the best growth habit? Remove crossed and dead branches and badly pruned stubs.

~ See where you could use more winter garden interest, whether in the form of evergreen foliage, interesting fruit or bark, or attractive growth habit? Plan to add plants in the spring to fulfill those goals if you find them lacking. Prepare mail order lists and submit them early to avoid choice plants selling out.

~ Read about the heroic plant explorers who endured great hardship to introduce new plants to cultivation? You may grow several, so you'll want to know more about their origins. There are wonderful biographies of E.H. Wilson, Frank Kingdon-Ward, Augustine Henry, and many others.

~ Plant up seeds requiring stratification early enough to ensure they receive the cold period they require? Plant seeds as soon as possible after receiving them from various seed exchanges and commercial sources. If you can't get to it for some reason, you could also refrigerate the seed packets and plant them out when it warms up.

~ Be patient? Spring will eventually arrive, hopefully in a triumphant compressed tsunami of bloom, unaffected by late frost.

~ Start large construction projects early? You'll have more energy and enthusiasm early in the season, before it gets hot, and you're preoccupied with weeding and deadheading. Move soil and stone, spread mulch and gravel, build fences and structures. You may not finish, but you won't feel guilty all summer for not having started.

~ Cover troughs, containers, and planting beds with salvaged evergreen boughs to protect against winter heaving and freeze/thaw damage. The streets are lined with discarded Christmas trees for the taking. May-



Sternbergia lutea

Photo by Jane McGary



be there's one or more by your own front door? Stick conifer branches, or thorny Holly or Barberry, in your empty annual containers to discourage squirrels from digging.

~ Learn what poison ivy looks like without leaves and avoid accidentally pruning the vines? The furry stems are very distinctive and easy to recognize.



~ Prepare for your arriving hardy seed orders by filling seed pots and placing the pots closely in trays so they won't be knocked over and spilled. Bring them inside a day or two before planting so the planting medium will be thawed when you plant. A combination of Pro-Mix and Turface or another calcined clay soil additive works for most seeds, even alpenes, and helps retain soil moisture during the growing season. Top dress seed pots with more Turface or fine aquarium gravel. Planting seed early and leaving them outside will provide the stratification period most hardy seed requires. Cover seed trays with hardware cloth to keep squirrels from digging in the seed pots and destroying all your hard work. Growing alpenes, perennials, and even woody plants is easy, satisfy-

ing, and a great way to get plants unavailable at local nurseries or through mail order.

~ Spend some quality time with the flood of seed and plant catalogs filling your mailbox this time of year? Some can be wonderful educational resources. There are also wonderful plant selections offered by two mail order nurseries with impressive online catalogs.

~ Plan to order or grow from seed more summer-flowering rock garden plants to extend the season of interest in your garden and troughs?

Many species and cultivars of *Delosperma* have become available recently, largely through the efforts and selections of Panoyoti Kelaidis.



***Delosperma* from
Panoyoti Kelaidis**

Photo from Plant Delights

~ Strive for twelve months of bloom in your garden. Don't overlook the winter-blooming bulbs, such as snowdrops, crocus, and early daffodils.

~ Plant up seeds requiring stratification early enough to ensure they receive the cold period they require? Plant seeds as soon as possible after receiving them from various seed exchanges and commercial sources. If you can't get to it for some reason, you could also refrigerate the seed packets and plant them out when it warms up.

~ Divide herbaceous plants earlier for your own use, as gifts, and as donations to the chapter plant sale. Plants that may be difficult or impossible to divide successfully later in the season, like *Symphytum* spe-



***Delosperma* 'Fire Spinner' from
Panoyoti Kelaidis**

Photo from Plant Delights Online



cies, are effortless in this early stage of growth. Be careful when digging to avoid damage to late-emerging plants whose locations you may have forgotten.

~ Use the first warm days of early Spring to prune shrubs and trees of dead wood and to improve structure. You may want to wait a couple weeks to prune maples, dogwoods, and other trees that bleed sap heavily, but this is a great way to start the season off right.

~ Plant out your Christmas Amaryllis bulbs when the weather warms in April? You should be tiring of the masses of foliage indoors by then. I've planted Amaryllis outside by a building foundation 6-8" deep on the north side of the house for several years, where they emerge from dormancy each spring and bloom regularly each May. They'd probably appreciate more sun, but seem to have adapted happily and the bulbs continue to grow larger each year. I imagine NYC is the northern edge of their hardiness, but experiment and report back the results.

~ Look closely at your garden and think about adjustments in the planting bed and path layout? This is much easier when plants are dormant and you can concentrate on structure, rather than weeding, dead-heading and seasonal tasks. Look for places that would benefit from an evergreen winter presence, prune for improved form and air circulation, and revise path locations for more efficient circulation through the garden and more pleasing geometry.

~ Grow Clematis through shrubs and small trees. Their delicate stems, profuse, colorful flowers, and well-behaved foliage of most species and cultivars lend themselves well to this treatment.

~ Use any extra time to complete garden tasks you may have deferred until spring. Prune trees and shrubs while you can better see the structure and cut back any herbaceous growth you didn't get to earlier.

~ Challenge yourself to grow new and unfamiliar plants, preferably grown from seed sourced through various seed exchanges? There will also be familiar plants you'll want to acquire, but reach for the unfamiliar as well. You'll never know until you try, and if it isn't all you hoped for, you don't have to keep it.

~ Find more ways to grow plants on walls? There are so many ways to green a bare wall: self-clinging vines, vines unobtrusively supported on picture wire, wire baskets hung on walls, trellis support, plants cascading from boxes on parapets atop walls and other means. Consider every bare surface an opportunity. ♡

[Steven Whitesell lives in Jamaica, New York, and is editor of the "The Urban Rock Gardener," the newsletter of the Manhattan Chapter of NARGS. This article adapted for "The Trillium" and used by permission.]



Clematis Etiole Violette

Photo by David Marsden, theanxiousgardener.com Used with Permission

NARGS Piedmont Chapter Meeting

JC Raulston Arboretum
Ruby McSwain Education Building

March 15, 2015

Brian Jackson

“Horticultural Adventures in Global Gardens and Glens”

NC State University, Horticultural Science
Raleigh, NC 27695-7609

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Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox

Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

May 16 Croatan National Forest Road Trip

We're very fortunate that Tim Alderton has agreed to lead us on a visit to this botanically rich area. For those who may not be familiar with it, the Croatan National Forest occupies a triangle between New Bern, Swansboro and Morehead City. Much of it is pine forest—longleaf where fire is encouraged—along with pocosins, lakes, ponds, river swamps, marshes and occasional hardwood forests. It would take days to explore it all, but we'll try to pack us much as possible into one *full* day.

Upon arriving, we will meet at the Cedar Point Recreational Area (west of NC Highway 58) on the White Oak River, near Swansboro. A short walk takes us to a nearby picnic area for lunch. Afterwards, we drive east along NC Highway 24 to Pringle Road. Then north a few miles into the forest, we'll park and botanize near the road.

We will take a short walk along a forest “road” to another botanically hot area where Tim has found many carnivorous plants: Venus Flytrap pitcher plant, and sundew. We'll also see many non-carnivorous herbaceous plants, as well as typical coastal shrubs such as *lyonia*, wax myrtle, fothergilla and gallberry.

At this point we'll walk around Patsy's Pond (just off Hwy 24) time permitting, then head north to the Island Creek Trail in the northern part of the Croatan. The trail traverses a mostly hardwood forest and occasionally descends to the cypress-studded creek. Marl outcrops along the creek provide a habitat for plants that prefer neutral to alkaline soils, a natural “rock garden” in the coastal plain. This ends the day trip, but if you plan to stay longer and drive your own car, please let me know for head count purposes. ☞ Charlie Kidder

Food Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letter below, please consider bringing something to share.

March W—Z

April—Every one

Saturday, April 25, 2015

Lasting Impressions' 9th annual

OPEN GARDEN & ART SHOW

9am - 4pm

4904 Hermitage Dr., Raleigh, NC 27612

Showcasing the spring garden with local artists and craftspeople
and a huge plant sale!

www.lastingimpressionsleaves.com; 919-787-6228
Amelia Lane and Beth Jimenez

Happy 83rd Birthday to Bobby Wilder

At the February meeting, we celebrated Bobby's birthday with a delicious chocolate birthday cake provided by Marlyn Miller. Bobby has been the Piedmont Chapter treasurer for over 20 years and a faithful supporter of both NARGS and JCRA.



Photo by Bobby

Here's to many more, Bobby.



Photo by Bobby Ward