Relict Species in Southern Sichuan

Last fall, I was in China in September and October for fieldwork in southern Sichuan. My original plan was to search for and collect seeds of *Acer pentaphyllum*, along with seeds from plants growing with or near this curious and beautiful maple, in the Muli and Daocheng areas of southwestern Sichuan. I had already thoroughly explored the populations of *Acer pentaphyllum* in regions further north in Jiulong, Kangding and Yajiang counties, but had recently been told by my friend, Beijing botanist Chen Yousheng, of at least three other populations of *Acer pentaphyllum* in the Muli area. The original discovery of the species in 1929 by Joseph Rock was not far from Muli and I was determined to better understand the distribution of this rare and endangered maple. However, the Chinese government would not allow me access to Muli and Daocheng, Tibetan regions of western Sichuan, due to the riots in Tibetan areas of China the previous spring.

As an alternative, my host, Professor Tang Ya of Sichuan University, suggested that I work in southern Sichuan in the Dafengding Shan (Big Windy Peak Mountains), the most southern of the areas where pandas occur. This is a little explored, very rich area just north of the Chang Jijiang (Yangtze River). Other than the leeches, of which there were far too many, it was a successful expedition, but the condition of the roads and the accommodations were dreadful. The roads were so bad that on more than one occasion I refused to stay in the jeep as our driver carefully maneuvered across half-collapsed bridges over rushing rivers so loud we had to shout to hear each other. It was also not a very good seed year, probably due to the severe winter and late frost that the area had experienced earlier in the year. This made for long days hiking in mist-covered mountains searching for viable seed.

The next day, while walking through a remote mountain village, carefully avoiding the thick mud that covered what served as the only road, children of all ages, some shoeless, others with snot hanging from their gritty nostrils, old men squatting in small groups smoking in the doorways of their mud houses, young women nursing sleepy-eyed babies, old women momentarily stopping their work of cooking, washing, and carrying firewood, groups of mischievous boys looking for something to do, and strikingly beautiful young girls with their shiny black hair tied back, all stared in amazement as, for a brief moment, we altered their otherwise routine lives with our awkward, unexpected presence. Only the wandering pigs and chickens seemed not to notice us.

GOOD News in 2009

The most exciting member news this year is Quarryhill Botanical Garden’s membership in the American Horticultural Society’s *Reciprocal Admissions Program*. As a participating member garden, our own members now have access to a wide array of botanical gardens, arboreta, and conservatories throughout North America, including Canada and the US Virgin Islands, offering special admission privileges and many other benefits. You can see the many gardens you can now access by visiting www.ahs.org, following the link to the *Reciprocal Admissions Program* and clicking on the online directory. Quarryhill has also added this link to its own website, under *Memberships*, so that you can access it at any time.
I was, however, fortunate to collect seeds from several relict species. The World Wildlife Fund states that “a relict species may be one that had a wider range but is now found only in particular areas, or it may have survived relatively unchanged from an older period when other kinds of species went extinct.” On one leech-filled day, I did see seven different species of both maples and rhododendrons in a short, uphill hike following and crossing a rapid river on slippery boulders. These were growing under or with the following five relict species: *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Tetraclitron sinense*, *Euptelea pleiosperma*, *Davidia involucrata*, and *Magnolia sargentiana*. This is the stuff of a plant hunter’s delight, to see rare and endangered relict species still thriving, albeit very few, in remote areas not yet devastated by us humans. Written by William McNamara

**Save the Date!!**

May 30, 2009 is the date for the Annual Spring Celebration. There will be an expanded plant sale and another silent auction. Tours will be given throughout the day and a delicious luncheon will be served. This year’s speaker will be **Peter Del Tredici** from the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University. Entrance fee is $35/non-member and $25/member. **Reservations are required!**

**International Visitor**

Birgit Wonneberger returned to Quarryhill to volunteer with us for three months this winter. Birgit is Head Gardener at Syringa Nursery in Singen, Germany. Birgit’s nursery specializes in peonies, German wildflower seeds, and fragrant plants from around the world. As winter snow slowed her responsibilities in Germany, Birgit was able to visit us for the second time. Birgit invested a significant amount of her time at Quarryhill in both garden surveying and plant propagation. She is a talented plantsperson. We miss her and sincerely hope that she will be able to return to work with us again in the future.

**Plants In Peril - China’s Ecological Crisis**

Two of the world’s leading botanists, **Peter Raven**, National Science Medal Recipient, and **Stephen Blackmore**, Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, will discuss the threats to China’s remarkable flora and what can be done to reverse the loss of plant diversity there. China is the original home for much of the world’s plant heritage, however, that rich legacy is threatened by dam building, timber exploitation, and many other aspects of the country’s rapid development. Chinese scientists are eagerly cooperating with international conservation efforts, yet time is critically short in the race to defend China’s ecological integrity. The lecture and wine reception will be held on April 17th, 2009, from 6:00 pm until 7:30 pm at the newly re-opened California Academy of Sciences. The cost is $75.00 per person and is a tax deductible contribution to Quarryhill Botanical Garden’s conservation program in China. The attendee will also receive a year-long membership to Quarryhill. Seating will be limited. Call (707) 996-3166 for reservations.

**Volunteering in Quarryhill's Nursery**

Should you be interested in volunteering in the nursery, please contact Corey Barnes at the nursery office: 996-6027. Tasks in the nursery are varied. Volunteers practice most methods of propagation, and also participate in transplanting, weeding, and pot-washing. Whether you are an avid gardener or an aspiring novice, Quarryhill’s nursery is the place to learn some new propagation techniques, get your hands dirty, and enjoy some pleasant conversation. No previous experience is necessary. Without our nursery volunteers, we would have fewer plant species in the garden and our spring fundraiser would not be nearly as successful. We plan several activities for our volunteers each year, including lunches and field trips to public and private gardens and nurseries. Volunteering in the nursery at Quarryhill is a significant way to contribute to our mission!
"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

Greek Proverb

2008 Visitors to Quarryhill

In 2008, Quarryhill was honored with visits from several distinguished botanists and horticulturists from around the world. Beginning in February, the late Peter Wharton, along with his wife Sarah, were here for several days from Canada. Peter was Curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden at the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden in Vancouver. Sadly, Peter was taken from us all too soon last June. He was one of the great plantsmen of our time and his knowledge of trees was legendary. In May, Koyama Tetsuo and his wife Vivian visited Quarryhill. Dr. Koyama is Director General of Kochi Prefectural Makino Botanical Garden & Museum, in Kōchi City, Japan. Later in May, John Simmons, the retired Curator of the living collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, arrived to be our speaker for Quarryhill’s annual Spring Celebration. In July, we had a visit from Yang Yuming and his associate Wang Kanglin. Dr. Yang is the Vice President of the Southwest Forestry University in Kunming and has assisted us with our field work in Yunnan. Tony Kirkham, with his wife Sally and their two children, came for a visit in August. Tony is Head of the Arboretum at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and has participated in several of Quarryhill’s expeditions. Peter Symes, Curator of Environmental Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens in South Yarra, Australia, stopped by in September. Botanist Chen Yousheng from Beijing visited in October. Chen Yousheng, a renowned maple expert, helped us determine the species name of several of our Chinese maples. Dr. Viet Martin Dörken from the Botanical Garden at the Ruhr-University Bochum, Department of Plant Biodiversity Evolution in Germany dropped by in November. Also in November, Tom Cox, Director of the Cox Arboretum near Atlanta, Georgia, visited with his wife Evelyn. Evelyn is the editor of the Conifer Quarterly and Tom is the past president of the American Conifer Society. 2009 is starting out in equal fashion with a visit from Professor Stephen Hopper, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in mid January. Steve was the distinguished speaker for our annual winter fireside chat.

\[ Image of Peter Wharton, 1950-2008 \]

Bill McNamara, Stephen Hopper and Bob Smith

Remember to share the gift of Quarryhill with your friends and family. Fill out a Membership Form and we’ll do the rest.

BENEFITS

- Free admission Mon-Sat 10am-4pm
  (garden is closed Sundays & holidays)
- Semi-annual newsletter
- Personalized membership card
- 20% Discount for events & workshops
- 10% Discount at participating nurseries
- Free or discounted admission to AHS gardens

**Special thanks to the nurseries who provide our members with 10% discounts:**

- Half Moon Bay Nursery
- Sonoma Mission Gardens
- Wedekind’s Garden Center
- Wildwood Farms
- And now there are two more Nurseries to thank:
  - Peacock Horticultural Nursery
  - Emerisa Gardens

Quarryhill Membership & Donation Form

**CATEGORIES**

- **Individual** $35 +
- **Family** $60 +

The following categories include invitations to special events and recognition in the newsletter:

- **Contributor** $100 +
- **Sustainer** $500 +
- **Patron** $1,000 +
- **Expedition Circle** $2,500 +

I do not wish to become a member at this time, but please accept my contribution of $ _______.

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________  City: _________________________  State: _____  Zip: ___________

Email: ____________________________________________  Phone: _________________________  GIFT MEMBERSHIP? Y / N

Enclosed is my check to Quarryhill Botanical Garden in the amount of $ _______. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Send membership form and checks to: Quarryhill Botanical Garden, PO Box 232, Glen Ellen, CA 95442.
March 14  **Magnolias in March:** Walk through the garden’s beautiful Magnolia collection led by Executive Director, Bill McNamara.

10am - Noon, $15 Non-members / $10 Members

March 28  **Beekeeping with Serge Labesque:** Serge is the local expert on bees and beekeeping and he has kindly agreed to give a workshop on the importance of bees to gardens and life.

10am - Noon, $15 Non-members / $10 Members

April 18  **FREE Earth Day Open House:** Celebrate Earth Day at Quarryhill. Last year was such a success that Quarryhill will host a second Earth Day open house.

No reservations necessary. 10am - 3pm, FREE

May 2  **Photography in the Garden:** Pat Brownlie, our resident photographer, will give a photography workshop and lead a walk in the garden to take pictures. Bring a camera.

10am - Noon, $15 Non-members / $10 Members

May 30  **Annual Spring Celebration:** Luncheon featuring a silent auction, an exotic plant sale and guided garden walks. This year’s guest speaker is Peter Del Tredici, the senior research scientist at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

Reservations are required! 10am - 3pm, $35 Non-members / $25 Members

June 7  **Full Moon Walk:** Bill McNamara, Executive Director of Quarryhill, will be guiding a moonlit summer walk through the garden. Refreshments will be served.

7:30 pm - 10pm, $25 Non members / $20 Members.

June 20  **Propagation Workshop - Grafting:** Corey Barnes, Quarryhill’s Nursery Manager, will hold a workshop on bench grafting.

10am - 2 pm, $25 Non-members / $20 Members

June 27  **Butterfly Walk:** Take a walk in the garden and learn about local butterflies and their habitat. Quarryhill docent and butterfly enthusiast Nancy Wagner will give an informative talk and walk.

10am - Noon, $15 Non-members / $10 Members

July 25  **Bamboo Workshop:** Join David Fazzio of Sonoma Mission Gardens for an informative lecture on bamboo in the garden.

10am - Noon, $15 Non-members / $10 Members

If you are interested in any of these workshops or events please call the main office at (707) 996-3166 or send an email to info@quarryhillbg.org. **Reservations are required for all workshops and events, except the Earth Day open house.** The Docent-led third Saturday of the month tours begin on March 21st. The dates for these are April 11, May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19 and the last Docent-led tour of 2009 is October 17.

Visit www.quarryhillbg.org for more articles, pictures and all upcoming events at the garden.
The Prayer Flag Tradition

The Quarryhill prayer flags at the top of the garden carry on a very important and ancient tradition. According to Tibetan Buddhists, there is perhaps no simpler way to create good merit in this troubled world of ours than to put prayer flags up for the benefit of other living beings. Prayer flags are not just pretty pieces of colored cloth with funny writing on them. The ancient Buddhist prayers, mantras and powerful symbols displayed on them produce a spiritual vibration that is activated and carried by the wind across the countryside. All beings that are touched by the wind are uplifted and a little happier. The silent prayers are blessings spoken on the breath of nature. Just as a drop of water can permeate the ocean, prayers dissolved in the wind extend to fill all of space.

The prayer flag tradition has a long continuous history dating back to ancient Tibet, China, Persia and India. The tradition has now reached the West and is growing in popularity. The meanings behind prayer flag texts and symbols, indeed behind the whole idea of prayer flags, are based on the most profound concepts of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy.

The Tibetan word for prayer flag is Dar Cho. “Dar” means to increase life, fortune, health and wealth. “Cho” means all sentient beings. Prayer flags are simple devices that, coupled with the natural energy of the wind, quietly harmonize the environment, impartially increasing happiness and good fortune among all living beings. (Next installment: History of Prayer Flags)

Information provided by Timothy Clark, written in the 8th month of the Water Horse year at Redway, CA - Copyright Radiant Heart Studio.
The Mission of Quarryhill Botanical Garden is to Advance the Conservation, Study, and Cultivation of the Temperate Flora of Asia