

***Sandra Angadi wrote this account of her trip for us while she was still in the USA.***

I am on my annual visit to the USA to visit my friend Gerry, (whose garden featured in the talk I gave on my garden in France), and my daughter who lives in New Orleans. Gerry's garden was the first garden of any size that I had had the opportunity to design and plant so for me, this was a voyage of discovery.

In the first place it was a voyage of discovery as previous gardening had been limited to a small front garden and window boxes. It was also a voyage of discovery because I was designing and choosing plants for an unfamiliar terrain and climate. The initial stages of the garden began in 1992, when I went over to view the land attached to the house my friend had recently bought. This first trip was limited to measuring up and researching the trees and shrubs that would grow in Georgia. The climate I discovered was very hot and humid in summer, with warm autumns, and springs that alternated between spells of cold weather, with occasional frosts, to weather very like a good English summer – all of which could occur in the space of two or three days! It was also clear from the number of azaleas and camellias being grown in surrounding gardens, that the soil was acid.

The following spring I returned to translate the plan from paper to reality and to search for the plants that I had selected. This was in the days before the Internet so it was not an easy process as good quality nurseries

offering the range of plants, shrubs and trees (particularly herbaceous plants) were practically non-existent. Having been used to the wide range of plants and suppliers easily available in the UK, this was something of a shock. In addition, when asking for herbaceous plants, I was invariably told that herbaceous plants would not survive in the Georgia climate.



Sourcing the camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons I wanted was easier, but even this involved considerable detective work and long drives into the surrounding countryside. These nurseries I found in the most unlikely places, deep off the beaten track in thickly forested countryside, miles from any habitation. One such place was found after driving for about three hours through deeply forested countryside.

Here I found a wonderful camellia and azalea nursery, which had hundreds of rhododendrons and azaleas growing under the shade of pines and live oaks (live oaks are the native tree in the southern states) I have to confess that my initial enquiry to the owner about the varieties he had in stock was

somewhat sceptical, which was perhaps understandable given the location. However, I soon realised how wrong I was when, in response to my questions, he began to talk in great depth about all the varieties and species he grew. In addition, in the course of the conversation, he mentioned his recent visit to an international rhododendron conference in the west of Scotland!

Another grower of camellias and rhododendrons discovered in equally remote surroundings had supplied plants to The Queen at Windsor!

So the camellias, azalea and rhododendron collection for the garden was on its way to completion, but there was still the problem of where to find the herbaceous plants. I then had a lucky break when on my next visit the following year I was told of a nursery, 20 miles away (also deep in the countryside) that might have some plants I would be interested in. I drove there one morning, expecting the same disappointing display, instead found a nursery full of a large and interesting variety of herbaceous plants beautifully presented and in very good condition. It was clear that they were being grown by people who knew and loved their plants and knew how to look after them; it was the nearest thing I had found to a good English nursery. I got to know the owners, Rick and Marc over the years and they became friends and a place I looked forward so much to visiting every year.

#### GOODNESS GROWS NURSERY LEXINGTON GEORGIA

I discovered that for thirty-one years, this couple had shared a passion for preserving and popularising perennial garden plants. While students at the University of Georgia, they had discovered a mutual interest in

gardening and started Goodness Grows in 1977 as a simple landscaping business.

About 70% of the plants offered for sale at Goodness Grows are herbaceous perennials. The rest is a careful selection of flowering shrubs, trees, and other plants. When Rick and Marc founded Goodness Grows, perennials, in the southern states, were being treated as the forgotten stepchildren of the plant world. Few in the nursery industry even realised perennials could be cultivated in the south. Their commitment to the re-introduction and promotion of these plants inspired the renaissance of their use and popularity in the south and the nursery's propagation and protection methods have set an industry-wide standard for perennial plant production. Goodness Grows was featured on a Public Broadcasting Service production (the nearest thing the states have to the BBC) which featured twenty nurseries around the world as must see and visit places.

This spring I made my annual visit to the garden and to see Rick. During this visit to Goodness Grows I found a wonderful shrub, *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, which is familiarly known as the Chinese Paper Bush Plant.



This shrub often begins flowering in mid-winter, long after its foliage has fallen. Its silhouette is a tracery of thick, upright branches, somewhat like a young fig tree with more spread. Each flower head is creamy yellow, composed of masses of tiny florets to form a 1½ to 2-inch cluster. The blooms are set on the very tips of the branches, and once they open, they remain for six to eight weeks, releasing a fabulously sweet, intense scent.

Of course, as soon as I had bought this plant for Gerry's garden, I wanted to find out if it was possible to grow it in my garden in France. With the wonder of the Internet, I was able to find out from the RHS website that there were suppliers of the plant in the UK and that, in sheltered surroundings, it was possible to grow it. Again, with the wonderful Internet, I sourced a nursery in Kent, very near the M20 (my route to the tunnel and my journey to France) that could supply it. I will collect it on my journey to France in April and I will have one more plant that will be another reminder in my garden in France, of the garden in the USA, of Goodness Grows and my friend Rick.

***Hazel Belsey has written this article about how the harsh winter has affected her more tender plants at BROOKFIELD.***

Doom and Gloom in the garden. I've been spending all my time digging up dead shrubs killed by the awful winter. Having struggled to grow Ceanothus I finally succeeded and now it too is dead. I've lost six or more Pittosporums – with two more struggling.

My special Daphne Collina is, I think,

dead. The lovely Embotrium isn't looking too good nor do the Crinodendrons. The Embotrium is well over 20 feet tall and I will be very sad if it dies. It's going to be a good spring for the nurseries.

Sometime ago I wrote to Roy Lancaster asking why professional gardeners don't encourage people 'north of Watford' to try some slightly tender plants. I listed the ones I have grown successfully for some years at over 700 feet above sea level. Now I have to eat my words!

My optimism surfaces when I look around the garden and see lots of nice things starting to flower. Two rhododendrons are in flower – one purple, one pink – and have escaped the recent frosts. Tête-a-tête daffodils, Pulmonarias in pink, blue and purple, Cardamine, Scillas and Chinodoxa. Cyclamen coum were good but over now. The Oxlips are out and Primroses in lilac, deep red and yellow. Tête-a-tête and Muscari look well in window boxes. Daphne Jacqueline Postill is in flower – not many, but the scent is lovely.

All good news in the conservatory: a huge white Jasmine has been beautiful about six by five feet and the perfume scents the sitting room. The pineapple broom is flowering and Polygala with very pretty pea-shaped flowers in purple. Two orchids which I had been given and still to come Callistemon the red bottle brush and pink Grevillea and Clivia has five large flower heads in orange.

So here we go... best foot forward into spring. I have a verse hanging in my kitchen which reads:

'Only special people become gardeners  
Or does gardening make people special?'

## ***Thoughts from the chair***

It's nice to be able to say that since the last newsletter we have actually been out in the garden. The plants are coming up in the greenhouse and the pergola is back up, in its new home.

Those of you who have walked up Moorhouse Lane will have seen that it is now on the decking overlooking the stream. If I think on I will take a photograph of it and put it on the website, so those who don't walk up the lane will know what I'm talking about.

To business: if you have a computer please put this paper copy of the newsletter back and look at it on line! We are cutting down the number of copies that we are printing.

### **Events**

May 19: Hill Top at Ilkley.

June 18: Jacqueline Iddon Hardy Plants at Bretherton in Lancashire

July 24: Summer Lunch

August 18: Pat Clark's garden at Harrogate.

If you are intending to go on May 19 or August 18, could you please speak to Anne Collinson for directions and to provide her with an idea of how many people are intending to go.

If you want to visit Jacqueline Iddon Hardy Plants could you please see Sue Gibson with your cheque for £25 per person, tonight.

We need to know tonight how many people are going to ensure that the trip is viable.

## **The summer lunch and plant swap**

This year's summer lunch is being held on Sunday, 24 July here at the Community Centre at 12.30pm and not 2.30pm as shown in the "Outreach".

There will be a plant swap so bring a plant or two and you may go home with more than you brought!

**Richard**