



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contacts: Joe Matassino

Dir. of Development

(302) 658-6262 x103

jmatassino@dehort.org

Wendy Scott

Communications Mgr.

(302) 658-6262 x104

wscott@dehort.org

28th Annual Rare Plant Auction® at Longwood Gardens on April 26, 2008

*Proceeds Benefit Delaware Center for Horticulture's
Community Greening & Education Programs*

WILMINGTON, DE – The Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH) will host the 28th Annual Rare Plant Auction® at 6:30 p.m., on Saturday, April 26, 2008 at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA. Since 1980, plant lovers from across the nation have attended this premier event to find rare, newly-introduced or difficult to propagate plants.

DEAN F. FALEY of Christie's Fine Art Auctioneers will conduct a Live Auction of exceptional specimens and unusual collections. An additional 400 prize plants and garden art will be up for bid during a Silent Auction. Last year's event raised more than \$148,000 for community greening and education programs in Delaware. A highlight of the 2008 event will be a giant jigsaw puzzle illustrating these programs as it is assembled throughout the evening's festivities.

New this year are several extraordinary auction items on a grander scale than has ever been seen in the history of the event:

- 1. *Quercus castaneifolia* – A mature chestnut-leaved oak, delivered and planted**
Few trees are more majestic than the oak. Known for its longevity and strength, a mature specimen will dominate the landscape, stand tall through the storms, and be there for generations to enjoy. Such is the chestnut-leaved oak, a rarely-seen species in this area. Rarer still is the size of this specimen – already 25 feet tall – and the offer to plant it within a 30-mile radius of Longwood Gardens (*negotiable*). Procured as a seedling from the National Arboretum 10 years ago, it has grown into a lovely shape that has never needed pruning. The deep, rich green leaves are remarkably similar to a chestnut's.

(more)

Known to grow to 100 feet, this beauty may one day rival the national chestnut-leaved oak champion at Kew Gardens in England, already 100 feet tall and wide – “the biggest, finest and unrivalled specimen of its type in the world.” This specimen is already off to an excellent start. Carefully root-pruned and tended, it will be dug while still dormant especially in time for the Auction and planted with a 90-inch tree spade.

2. A Garden Room

Imagine a pleasant, shady spot in the garden – a bench surrounded by boxwoods and anchored by flowering trees and shrubs. Flagstones edged by groundcovers spread out at your feet as you sit back in the dappled sunlight and a breeze flits by. Now imagine all of this in your own back yard. Several donors have cooperated to create a beautiful outdoor room in the space you designate. Premiere boxwoods, several flowering trees and shrubs, and a collection of shade-loving groundcovers will combine to transform part of your property into a peaceful alcove. Plant specimens are top flight and include *Buxus* ‘Dee Runk,’ ‘Morris Dwarf,’ and ‘Vardar Valley,’ all from the renowned boxwood experts at Saunders Brothers Nursery in Virginia.

3. A Grove of *Acer griseum* – Five paperbark maples, delivered and planted

A single paperbark maple can never be enough, which is why we are offering an entire grove of these coveted trees. A smaller, trifoliolate maple, *Acer griseum* is best known for the quality of its exfoliating bark which curls off in thin sheets leaving behind a polished surface that shines through all four seasons. The emerging leaves are delicate blue-green and turn burnished red in fall. Also delicate is the branching pattern and stature of this lovely tree, which reaches approximately 30 feet. The specimens being offered are already 10 feet tall. When planted together as a grove – which service is included in this offer – these maples will become a focal point of your garden.

In addition to unusually large specimens and impressive installations, the Rare Plant Auction® (RPA) provides an opportunity for plant connoisseurs to bid on plants that can't be found anywhere else and often in quantities that allow many happy bidders to go home with at least one special plant won through competitive bidding.

Many well-known plant breeders from across the country donate specimens to this benefit event that are new to the trade or not yet introduced into the market. JIM AULT is responsible for a series of outstanding *Baptisias* coming out of the “Chicagoland Grows” program at the Chicago Botanic Garden. RPA will offer the brand-new *Baptisia* 'Solar Flare', and *Baptisia* 'Midnite', not yet introduced.

ALLAN ARMITAGE, considered the "Perennial Guru" because of his well known book, *Herbaceous Perennial Plants*, has just developed a new ironweed, *Vernonia lettermannii* 'Iron Butterfly' which is brand new to the market. This plant on offer at RPA is being propagated and grown at North Creek Nurseries in Landenberg, PA, a nursery devoted to native plants. The provenance of all plants in the auction is carefully researched and described in the event catalog.

The RPA attracts the cooperation and participation of many big names in the horticultural world. In 2008 our Celebrated Plant Expert will be PATRICK CULLINA, Vice President of

Horticulture and Facilities at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in New York. Plant donations are being made by more than 75 nurseries representing more than 20 states across the country from Washington and Oregon to many companies in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Plant Experts who volunteer to mingle with attendees and answer questions from the crowd are a veritable “Who’s Who” of horticultural professionals. Several of this year’s Plant Experts are recently-published authors, including RAY ROGERS, DR. RICHARD L. BITNER, DR. TOMASZ ANIŚKO AND CHARLES CRESSON. (For a complete list of Plant Experts and their bios, go online to rareplantauction.org.)

RAY ROGERS is a lifelong gardener, garden editor and writer, working on more than 40 garden titles. He has written for *The American Gardener* magazine, *Green Scene*, and *American Cottage Gardening* and is coauthor of *The Philadelphia Flower Show: Celebrating 175 Years*. His newest book, *Coleus: Rainbow Foliage for Containers and Gardens* is being published by Timber Press in 2008. Ray has appeared on a variety of radio and TV programs, including *Martha Stewart Living*, and has taught in the George Washington University Horticulture Program. Currently a consultant for a specialty nursery, he continues to pursue his horticultural interests as a home gardener, as an amateur hybridizer of *Hippeastrum* (amaryllis), and as an award-winning horticultural exhibitor. He lives in North Brunswick, New Jersey.

RICHARD L. BITNER, M. D. studied horticulture at Longwood Gardens and has been a Plant Study Walk instructor since 1993. He is a popular teacher of the Conifer and Deciduous Flowering Shrubs Series II Certificate courses, and is an instructor in the Professional Gardener Training Program. His critically acclaimed book, *Conifers for Gardens: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, was published by Timber Press in June 2007. His writing and photographs have appeared in various national and regional magazines, including *Green Scene*, *Horticulture*, *The American Gardener*, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s *Plants & Gardens*. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s Gold Medal Plant Award Committee. When he isn’t pursuing his passion for plants, Richard is a practicing anesthesiologist on the faculty of the Penn State School of Medicine/Hershey Medical Center.

TOMASZ ANIŚKO, curator of plants at Longwood Gardens, participated in seven of the expeditions (three to China, and two to both Georgia and Chile) described in *Plant Exploration for Longwood Gardens*. Dr. Aniśko received his master's degree in horticulture from the August Cieszkowski Agricultural University in Poznań, Poland, and his doctorate in horticulture from the University of Georgia in Athens.

CHARLES CRESSON is the award-winning author of several gardening books, a nationally known lecturer, and an instructor at Longwood Gardens. Hedgleigh Spring, his two-acre garden near Philadelphia, has been a family project for over a century and is known for its collection of rare plants. This lovely garden is featured in articles and books by Ken Druse, the late Rosemary Verey, and in the March 2002 issue of *Martha Stewart Living*. As a garden consultant, Charles has helped many avid gardeners develop their own gardens. He was awarded the Certificate of Merit from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 2001.

Ticket prices for RPA begin at \$200. A “Young Collectors” ticket price of \$100 is being offered for the first time for those 40 years and younger. All reservations admit entrance to Longwood Gardens for the day and include cocktails and a gourmet buffet dinner. Reservations received by March 15th will receive a \$25 certificate toward total auction purchases of at least \$100.

For more information contact Joe Matassino, Director of Development, at (302) 658-6262, ext. 103 or jmatassino@dehort.org. For the latest event updates, and to register for the event, go to www.rareplantauction.org.

Professional quality photographs and interviews with event leaders available upon request.

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The **Delaware Center for Horticulture** (DCH) cultivates greener communities by inspiring appreciation and improvement of the environment through horticulture, education and conservation. Founded in 1977, the Center’s headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware include a 1.5 acre educational demonstration garden, a 3,000 volume lending library, an art gallery, a lecture hall and a greenhouse. DCH supports 15 active community gardens throughout Wilmington; improves Delaware’s roadsides with native vegetation; maintains the landscaping of many urban gateways, corridors, and streetscapes; leads regional efforts to enhance Delaware’s urban forest; and provides educational programs for children, teens, and adults. For more information, visit www.dehort.org

Longwood Gardens is one of the world’s great horticultural displays, offering 1,050 acres of gardens, woodlands, and meadows, including 20 outdoor gardens and 20 indoor gardens within 4 acres of heated greenhouses. Featuring 11,000 different types of plants, spectacular fountains, stunning seasonal displays, extensive educational programs, and 800 horticultural and performing arts events each year, the Gardens are open every day, including holidays. Longwood is located on US Route 1 near Kennett Square, PA. For more information, visit www.longwoodgardens.org.