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An Inside Look

WEEPING TREES like the one on the cover of this issue were much admired by my Aunt Gussie, who, if she were living today, would be called a gardening “collector.” Among her prized plant collections were dozens of weeping willows from which we would harvest branches in early spring. She would remove the brown covers of the pussy willow flowers (catkins) and tint them pink with rouge. She assembled bunches of the most bizarre forms to give as gifts and always encouraged the recipients to keep the branches fresh in an opaque vase so they could later be planted in the garden. Today, some 60 years later, I can still point out willows in Robeson County, North Carolina, grown from her gifts of cuttings.

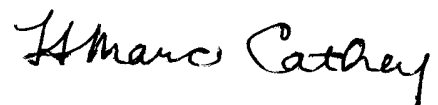
Willows are also particular favorites of my daughter, Marcy, who since childhood has loved to stand in the shelter of weeping willows during gentle rainstorms. She says the random shaking of the supple limbs and the sound of the leaves and branches rubbing together stimulate all her senses and make her feel truly connected to nature. Ultimately, that’s what gardening is all about: Establishing a bond with the natural world from which many of us are increasingly isolated.

In addition to the cover article on weeping trees, this issue contains a blend of stories that will both help in planning for spring and provide reasons to get out in the garden now. For inspiration, garden writer and photographer Karen Bussolini discusses how to effectively integrate silver or gray-colored plants into a garden design. And Associate Editor Carole Ottesen profiles some of the most intriguing new plants being introduced this year.

If your shrubs are getting overgrown, you’ll appreciate Managing Editor and Designer Mary Yee’s primer on rejuvenating mature deciduous shrubs. And if you are tired of the same old evergreen ground covers that everyone uses, consider some of the alternatives suggested by nursery owner David MacKenzie. Fans of garden writer Eric Grissell will enjoy an excerpt from his new book, *Insects and Gardens*, which describes how diversifying our gardens can help them become more self-sustaining.

As you launch into another year of gardening adventures in 2002, remember there are millions of people like Marcy who want to strengthen their connection with the earth through gardening and millions of others who would appreciate a “start” of an interesting plant in their garden—rouge notwithstanding! Help us to extend our reach by sharing the wealth of your gardens and your gardening experience with those around you.

Ever in green,



—H. Marc Cathey, *AHS President Emeritus*

IF YOU RECEIVED THIS MAGAZINE at home as part of your American Horticultural Society membership, note the valuable guide enclosed detailing how you can take advantage of AHS benefits such as free and discounted admissions to garden shows and botanical gardens throughout North America. The guide also includes the list of seeds available through the Society’s 2002 Free Seed Exchange, along with an order form that can be used to participate in this popular annual program.