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Contributed by Janet Mackey

## PLANTS AS CONNECTIONS

There are plants that I have moved around with me from garden to garden, in part because of the connections they provide me to friends and to the lessons they've taught me. Perhaps you, too, have a special hand-me-down plant that brings fond thoughts of the friend who gave you a rooted cutting or a reseeding annual that started with seeds from someone special. Or maybe you include a certain plant because it takes you back to a particular time or place. These plants impart a special character to our gardens, and I for one look forward to seeing them as the special season for each arrives.

My Edgeworthia brought this topic to mind on a grey January day. I first admired Edgeworthia when I volunteered at Historic London Town & Gardens near Annapolis. My friend, Anne, gave me a little Edgeworthia for my new gardens in Easton when I returned to the east coast after living on the west coast for a while. As I watch the buds turn to blossoms on that beautiful plant, I think fondly of my friend and of discovering how much can be learned through garden friendships. (You can see an Edgeworthia flower in Easton this winter. One grows in a front yard garden on Idlewild Road, across from the tennis courts in the park.)



Paperbush (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*)

In mid-spring when my purple Granny's Bonnet columbines flower, I think back through decades of adventures with my pal, Martha, who befriended me in 6<sup>th</sup> grade All Star Band. Martha's mother grew these



Granny's Bonnet Columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*)

beautiful blossoms, and Martha gave me seeds many gardens ago. I have grown out the plants, and saved and planted the seeds, as I moved around the country, reminding me that friendship is more important than distance.

I keep a small patch of wood spurge - *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* - to remind me to appreciate botanical names, as my friend, Cathy, encouraged me to do. When my array of Hellebores flower, including those with picotee flowers, I thank Annetta, a friend whose generosity with sharing plants has been my inspiration. And, as my small patch of native Pachysandra very slowly expands



Allegheny Spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*)

in my Woodland Garden, I think of Mary, a gardening friend who bolstered my resolve to find native plants that could survive the difficult gardening conditions we shared of dry shade marauded by deer. What good memories and life lessons my gardening friends have provided!

I hope connections with plants in your gardens bring you as much happiness as mine do me.