“Calm constance” of Bi Hall Greenhouse inspires research, poetry, and much more

On the sixth floor of McCardell Bicentennial Hall, on the south side of the building, lies one of the most serene and oxygen-filled spaces on campus. The College Greenhouse, with over 100 different plants and in the skilled hands of curator Patti Padua, feels like a tropical rain-forest in the middle of Vermont.

“I always like to have things flowing for people to see when they walk into the greenhouse,” says Patti, who’s been a member of the College staff since 2004. “I pay very close attention to the arrangement of plants in here.

“Our main focus is on faculty and students and whatever they need for their classes or their research. But I also have an interest in economic botany, so we also raise plants in here to demonstrate that we can produce foods not normally found in Vermont like coffee, cacao, vanilla, banana, and citrus fruits.

“The best thing is when it’s 20 below zero outside and it will be like 80 degrees and sunny in here. The warmth, the sweet smells, the humidity, and the aroma of the plant life – it’s just wonderful. I love it here!”

Visitors to the greenhouse agree. The space is open whenever Bi Hall is open, and countless students and visitors have stopped by over the years to read, contemplate, and enjoy the ambiance.

Like the person who said: “On a high stress campus the greenhouse allows me to be at peace in a serene, cool environment. This place is Midd’s best-kept secret.” Or the student who wrote, “This place makes me want to become a botanist.”

The greenhouse has inspired haiku poetry like:
“Night in the greenhouse
Sensitive plant is asleep
Banana plant grows.”
(Article continues on page 2)
A recent visitor left just eight words: “The greenhouse is a place of calm con-
stance.” Left unsigned, that short message shows how reassuring the greenhouse can be.

Just out of view upon entering the greenhouse, to the left of the orchids and fuscia, there’s a small round table with two comfy stools. That’s where the “sensitive plant,” Mimosa pudica, sits wait-
ing for visitors to touch its leaves so they can fold inward for several minutes, and then spring open again. It’s home to the greenhouse’s “living stones,” plants of the genus Lithops that resemble small, smooth rocks from another planet. The round

room is also where one student decided to complete an exam: “I am about to take my ecology and evolution midterm,” reads one passage in the notebook. “I thought this was an appropriate place to take it.”

The lure of the greenhouse is not lost on Language Schools students either. An entry from last summer reads: “This greenhouse comes as a pleasant surprise to an exhausted Language School stu-
dent...I look forward to returning to my new-found botanical reverie.”

Fava beans and climate change
The greenhouse is divided into two spaces: the indoor botanical garden or “conservatory,” and the research green-
house where students and faculty conduct experiments.

Students in the Natural Science and the Environment course are growing fava beans in native Vermont field soil under the direction of Marc Lapin, associate in science instruction. “The experi-
ment measures rhizobium nodulation on legume roots in order to explore nitrogen fixation, crop rotation, and the decreas-
ing use of inorganic nitrogen fertilizers,” Marc explains. “What I love about this lab unit is that it has such broad implica-
tions. From a rather small management

tool (i.e., using legumes and rhizobium bacteria to perform biological nitrogen fixation), students can move from the scale of one agricultural field, to the scale of pollution of Lake Champlain and ground water, and up to the scale of the entire global climate system.”

Professor of Biology Helen Young also has a deep appreciation for the green-
house and its curator: “The greenhouse is used academically for both teaching and research. One bay is filled with plants that we use for teaching purposes; the other bay is used by courses and students doing independent research. In addition, many students, faculty, and staff find

... many students, faculty, and staff find the greenhouse to be a peaceful, quiet, green refuge on campus, a place to slow down and appreciate nature on cold white winter days!”

How can such a wide variety of plants thrive in the same environment? Patti finds microclimates within the green-
house where different plants will do well. For example, the cacti and succulents get full southern sun and sparse water, while the ferns get misted regularly and are shaded from the sun under a bench. Patti also groups the plants in the conservatory by type, labels most of the specimens, and puts up notes for even-the-most casual visitors. “I love it when people discover the greenhouse for the first time. They go, ‘Wow. I had no idea this was here!’”

~ Robert Keren

Folklife Center Exhibition Explores Vermont Farm Stories

“Farming in Vermont - Past, Present, and Future”
December 7–31, 2009

45 students from John Elder’s “Farm Stories” class will offer their creative narratives of Vermont farm stories through an exhibition at the Vermont Folklife Center.

For more on the exhibit visit http://www.middlebury.edu/about/pubaff/news_releases/2009/pubaff_633941573099735795.htm
Notice of Change in Payroll Deadline for the Last Payroll of 2009

The College will close for the holiday break at noon Thursday, December 24, 2009, and reopen Monday, January 4, 2010. The last payroll of 2009 falls within the week we are closed, with a pay date of December 31, 2009.

The following change has been made to the time entry deadline and paycheck distribution:
• Deadline for submitting/approving time - Monday, 12/21/09, 10:00 a.m. (includes Web time entry, student timecards and all approvals).
• Paychecks and direct deposit stubs will be dated Thursday, 12/31/09.
• Paychecks will be available for pickup on Thursday, December 31, 2009, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. in the Human Resources Office.* (Please bring your College ID with you to pick up your check. You will only be able to pick up your own check — no exceptions. Any checks not picked up by 2:00 p.m. will be delivered through regular campus mail on Monday, January 4, 2010.)
• Direct deposit stubs will be delivered through regular campus mail on Monday, January 4, 2010. (View your pay information online — link to Banner Web: http://go.middlebury.edu/bw)

* Save time and gas - sign up for direct deposit by 12/14/09 and enjoy the convenience of having your pay directly deposited into your account(s) on 12/31/09!

~ Payroll/Human Resources

Winter Slips and Falls

Winter weather can be beautiful, but be aware that with winter weather comes the increased risk of slips and falls. Our Facilities Services department does a terrific job keeping pathways and parking lots cleared of ice and snow, but drifting, blowing, icing, and continuous snowstorms mean that these areas may become slippery.

Things you can do to prevent slips and falls:
• Wear appropriate footwear for the weather. Shoes/boots with traction are best during inclement weather.
• Watch where you are walking and be cautious on ice and snow covered pathways!
• Allow extra time when traveling on foot — rushing can lead to falls.
• Use the salt/sand from the buckets that will be placed inside main entrances of buildings. If you notice a slippery spot outside your building, please spread the salt/sand so others don’t fall.
• Make sure you stomp off snow covering your shoes when you enter a building so you don’t leave wet spots on stairs and in hallways that could cause someone to slip.
• Contact Facilities if you notice a walkway or parking lot that needs attention.

~ Payroll Office

Reminder: 27 Pay Periods in 2009

As announced in the March 27, 2009 MiddPoints, there are 27 pay periods in 2009 rather than the usual 26, with the final paycheck to be dated 12/31/09. Leap years account for the additional pay period; an extra day accumulates over time to cause an extra pay period every 11 years. Based on our biweekly pay cycle, the check date for the final pay period of the year falls on January 1, 2010. By law, the pay date has to be moved to December 31, 2009, thus causing an extra pay period in 2009.

Annual salaries are for the time period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. Regardless of the additional pay period in the calendar year, your annual salary remains unchanged. However, many of your deductions will change: medical, dental, flex spending, supplemental life/AD&D, 457b and United Way will not be withheld from the 27th paycheck. Your regular retirement contributions to the core and voluntary plans will continue as these are calculated as a percentage of total eligible earnings. Federal and state tax withholdings are calculated based on 27 pay periods instead of 26. Social Security and Medicare taxes are calculated as usual, as a percentage of taxable earnings.

Review and monitor your tax withholdings periodically and make adjustments as necessary. A new W-4 can be filed with Human Resources at any time. Please consult your tax accountant/advisor on making adjustments to your tax withholdings. You can also refer to IRS Publication 919, How Do I Adjust My Tax Withholdings at http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p919.pdf. Please note that the Payroll and Human Resources Offices cannot offer tax advice.

~ Payroll Office
Classifieds

Classified ads are free for members of the staff, faculty, student body and alumni of Middlebury College. Ads must be submitted seven days prior to the publication date. Guidelines for ads can be found on the MiddPoints section of the HR Website. Please send ads to Classifieds, MiddPoints, HR, Service Building, or e-mail to middpoints@middlebury.edu (electronic submissions preferred).

Auto
For Sale: 4 Winterforce studded snow tires mounted on alloy wheels; 215/60/16 for Subarus thru 2008; fit Impreza, Forester, Legacy, Outback. Tires used 2 winters; $190 for wheels & tires (they won’t fit our 2010 Outback). Contact Ed @ x5470; e-mail hilton@middlebury.edu.


Other
For Sale: Area rug 5 x 8, neutral green w/border in excellent condition, $90. Open pine dining hutch in very good condition, useful for storing china or books, $300. Call Eileen at x5064.

For Sale: Road bike (Stumpjumper) Specialized OMB, Direct MaxDrive. Dark blue aluminum 20” frame. Very good condition. $500 obo. Call 462.2899.


Real Estate
For Rent: Faculty house for rent from February (January, if needed) through June 2010. Beautiful home in Cornwall: 3 BR, 3 BA, 2 studies. Lovely, private setting, view of the Green Mtns., only 10 min. from campus. Rent includes care of 2 friendly cats. $800/mo. plus utilities. Call 462.2899 or e-mail mkatz@middlebury.edu.

For Sale or Rent: Charming, comfortable, well-maint. family house in New Haven, 15 min. drive from College. House dates from 1780s & features spectacular views of Adks., 5 acres, a beautiful deck, newly remodeled BAs, landscaped sitting area in wooded glade. 4 BR, large living/dining area w/wood stove, separate formal sitting or DR w/fireplace & adjoining reading nook, 2 BA, kitchen, washer/dryer. Wood floors throughout. $319,000 obo. Rental $1,200/mo. For further info. or viewing: Marion at mwells@middlebury.edu or 802.453.4929.

For Rent: Available Jan. 2010 (flexible). Charming 1825 stone farmhouse in Weybridge. 1.5 BR, 1.5 BA, LR, DR, kitchen, playroom. Cozy, quiet, convenient, & beautiful location on the banks of Otter Creek. Owned by Midd. alums and rented to faculty and staff for years. A bargain at $1,200/mo. (heat & all utilities included). Call 462.2899 or e-mail mwells@middlebury.edu or 802.453.4929.

For Rent: 3BR/2BA house 4 mi. from downtown Middlebury in great neighborhood. Upstairs: 2 BR, kitchen, living, BA, deck. Downstairs: kitchen, 1BR, BA, office, living area. One car garage. $1,300/mo. includes mowing/plowing. Renter pays all utilities. Also an option to rent upstairs or downstairs (separate entrances). No smoking, no pets. Please contact Manuel: 802.989.3616 or mcarball@middlebury.edu.

Free
Free to a caring home: Pair of cockatiels. We need to find a new home for our pet birds; we’ve had them for 6 years. They enjoy people and stimulation. Male is the classic gray pattern; female is white. Hand trained. With very nice cage. Call 989.0610.

Wanted
House/Cat-sitter Wanted: Spend Christmas in Cornwall! House-sitter/cat-sitter needed from December 23-27 at lovely home in Cornwall (views of Green Mtns.). Great place for your out-of-town relatives to stay! Call 462.2899; e-mail mkatz@middlebury.edu.

Wanted: Used ping pong table in good condition. Call Dee x2932.

Middlebury History
25 years ago ● Student Forum sponsored a debate between Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Vermont Majority on the topic of raising the drinking age to 21. Community Council denounced vandalism on campus and urged “an attitude of goodwill and open mindedness.”

10 years ago ● Mona Wheatley ’56, director of Bicentennial planning, received the Distinguished Service Award from Vermont Women in Higher Education. Dining Services won first prize for its white chili with herbs dish in the Idaho Bean Commission’s Recipe Contest.

5 years ago ● The Optimal Health Initiative Committee offered a delicious “Healthy Holiday Lunch” hosted by Patti McCallery, assistant banquet chef. Violin virtuoso Henning Kraggerud performed with pianist Helge Kjekshus in the Center for the Arts Concert Hall.

College Book Store
Bookstore Holiday Sale
Friday, Dec. 4 through Friday, Dec. 18.
20% discount on Middlebury clothing, gifts, and holiday books. (Some exceptions apply)