

Annual House Under Construction

We enjoyed our foray into annuals so much that we are putting up a greenhouse dedicated to annuals. We poured a new concrete pad to accommodate our mulch pile, and are in the process of finishing construction of a greenhouse on the pad where the mulch pile used to be. This not only provides a protected home for the annuals, but removes the eyesore that was the mulch pile from right in the middle of the parking area.

We'll be carrying a lot more annuals this year. The wonderful thing about the horticulture field is that it is so exciting to learn, and become enthusiastic, about another whole world of plants. We started with just perennials, and quickly went nuts over hostas. They are still the mainstays of our business. But it was so exciting to fall into the iris business, build a daylily collection, and fall in love with trees and shrubs. And then ponds and aquatic plants. And now annuals.

Fortunately, most of our employees know a lot about the annuals already. They are thrilled that we are finally jumping in with both feet. The new greenhouse will allow us to get plants in earlier, since we can protect them from the cold. We'll have some of the more cold tolerant plants in somewhere around the middle of April.

There will be an area in the greenhouse available for potting up annuals



Under Construction

into containers. We'll have more pottery on hand than ever. (We went a little bit nuts, again, ordering pottery.) But we will also have some inexpensive, but attractive, plastic pots available. Or feel free to bring your own

container. Our ladies of the greenhouse will be glad to help you select plant material for a container. You can pot it up yourself, or we can help or do it for you.

Open House And Hosta Walk

Our twentieth annual Open House and Hosta Walk will be held on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 7, 8 and 9. The hostas should be looking great at that time. Refreshments will be served, and drawings for prizes will be held each day. We will also have a selection of specially priced plants, including a good selection of hostas.

Peak bloom seasons: The peak of iris bloom is usually the last two weeks of May, although the weather

can affect bloom season significantly. The shorter, early bloomers generally start blooming by the first of May. **Daylilies** have an extended bloom season, but the peak season for us generally starts just after the 4th of July, and runs for the next three weeks. Some ornamental **grasses** plume out as early as July or August but most, including the spectacular *Miscanthus* varieties, plume out in September and early October.

RETAIL HOURS

We are open April 10 through October 10. Hours will be 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Saturday. We will be closed on Sundays, as well as on July 4 and Labor Day, September 3.

A Mole Trap That Works

This one really does work! The moles were just tearing up our lawn and gardens last year. We put poison in the runs, but you never really know if it works, and we worried that a dog or cat might dig up the poison. We used the spring loaded traps that jab sharp spikes into the run when the mole goes through with occasional success. The problem with those traps is that when they trip, they tend to pull themselves out of the ground, so that the spikes

don't go in far enough to kill the mole. The traps were tripped without catching the mole more often than not. And the only place to use them effectively is out in the lawn, where the prongs that hold them in the ground might be able to get a good grip. They are worthless in soft, mulched garden soil.

A customer told us about the Mole Eliminator. We tried a few last fall and caught around 15 moles in about 10 days. Admittedly, we had six traps set,

but we have a huge area to deal with. A trap or two in a normal size yard would be enough to take care of the problem. It's a little more expensive than the old stabbing trap, but well worth it, and it's a good, sturdy product that should last and last.

The Mole Eliminator is a spring loaded trap, but the spring works horizontally, so that it doesn't pull itself out of the ground. It's like two pairs of needle-nosed pliers being jammed into the mole run and then opened up so that there are two sets of jaws waiting for the mole. When the mole goes through, he trips the trap and the springs snap the jaws shut, squeezing the mole to an instant death.

All you have to do is set the trap in a run that is being used. We kept moving them around last fall whenever we saw a fresh run. It was amazing. If the mole tripped the trap, he was a dead mole. I don't know about you, but I like knowing that I got 'em.

Perennial Of The Year: *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low'

The Perennial Plant Association has named *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low' as the Perennial of the Year for 2007. This excellent plant has become increasingly popular since being introduced in 1988 due to its lovely, long-blooming blue-violet flowers, attractive gray-green foliage, lack of pest or disease problems, and low maintenance requirements.

The name, 'Walker's Low', reflects its Irish origins rather than (as many gardeners assume) its growth habit. It generally grows to 30 inches tall, and as wide, when in bloom. And what a great bloom! The blue-violet color goes well with just about any other perennial, making it a sure-fire companion to the yellows of *Coreopsis*, or the pink shades of *Dianthus*.

We like to plant it in groups of



3 or 5 to put on a great show. There has been a stand of it near one of the bridges that cross the stream in our front yard for several years. It has performed reliably every year. Flowering will continue through the summer if pruned back by two-thirds when the initial flowers fade. It likes lots of sun, thrives in average, well-drained garden soil, and is hardy to Zone 3.

The Perfect Little Blue Spruce

Most everybody likes the looks of a blue spruce. That blue color is just so cool. The problem with blue spruces is that they get so big. Give a blue spruce 20 years, and it's 30 feet tall and 15 feet in diameter. Not that there's anything wrong with that if you have the space for it and you want a tree to get that big (and continue getting bigger).

Wouldn't it be great if you could plant a blue spruce that wouldn't get over 9 or 10 feet tall? Now there is 'Sester Dwarf', a low maintenance, pint-sized version of the Colorado Blue Spruce. No shearing or pruning is nec-

essary to keep the tree small and well-shaped. This striking blue-needled spruce is densely branched with a conical shape, making for a perfect specimen tree for yard or garden. It is hardy to Zone 2. The mother plant is 25 years old and is only 9 feet tall.

We will have 'Sester Dwarf' in three sizes. They seem expensive, given their size, but not so expensive when you consider their age. The 3-Gal. size is \$99.99, and is 7 years old. The 20-Gal. size is \$349.99, and is 11 years old. And we will have one specimen in a 24" cedar box for \$499.99. It is 17 years old.

'Paradigm' Is Hosta Of The Year

We just can't seem to get enough of yellow-centered hostas, and 'Paradigm' is one of the showiest yet. The American Hosta Growers Association has named it the 2007 Hosta of the Year. This 1999 introduction has beautiful gold leaves, edged with broad blue-green margins, and forms a large clump. The yellow color intensifies by late spring, especially if the plant gets some morning sun. As the plant matures, the foliage becomes quite puckered, giving it a quilted look. Lavender flowers top the plant in summer.

'Paradigm' is the fourth yellow-centered hosta to be named Hosta of the Year, following in the footsteps of 'Paul's Glory', 'Guacamole', and 'Stained Glass'.

WHAT'S NEW ?

A complete list of our new plants is posted on our website, www.hornbaker-gardens.com. Here are some that we are excited about:

Hostas: 'Brother Stephan' is a spectacular yellow-centered hosta with large, heavily corrugated leaves and wide, dark green margins. 'Lonesome Dove' is a medium sized hosta with cupped, blue leaves with creamy white interiors.

Take a good look at 'Emerald Necklace'. We like this plant a lot. It has a subtle variegation—light green surrounded by dark green. The dark green margins are stitched and puckered like a necklace around the edge of each leaf. This is not a showy, knock-you-over hosta, but a classy, elegant, smaller hosta.

'American Icon' is a huge sport of 'Choo Choo Train'. It has large green leaves with wide gold margins. 'Americana' is a smaller hosta, a sport of 'Loyalist', with wider green margins and narrow, pure white centers. 'Silk Kimono' forms an elegant clump with gray-green, pointed leaves and white, rippled margins.

Daylilies: Bob Ellison has given 'Princeton' names to ten of his outstanding seedlings. Colors range all over the daylily spectrum, and they are all beautiful flowers. But the names are the fun part: Princeton Coffeehouse, Princeton Festival 56, Princeton Homestead Days, Princeton Medallion, Princeton Open Prairie, Princeton Prairie Art, Princeton Progress, Princeton Red Covered Bridge, Princeton Tiger, and Princeton Tradition. Or maybe you have to be from Princeton to be having as much fun with the names as we are.

Grasses: We thought that we would have *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gold Bar' last year, but our shipment failed to come in. We should have no problem getting it this year. We saw a clump of it this summer, and it is a very striking plant. It is a dwarf Zebra Grass, with dazzling, horizontal variegation. It forms a small clump 16-20 inches tall—great for smaller gardens, or near the front of larger borders. Though smaller than most other *Miscanthus* varieties, it still has the showy plumes for which this group of grasses is so well known. This one is destined to be very popular.

Perennials: *Baptisia* (False Indigo) is a plant that has always put on a reliable show of violet blue flowers for us. It forms a good-sized clump 3-4' tall, and is covered with flowers in late spring. Now there are three new varieties in different colors. 'Wayne's World' has white flowers, 'Purple Smoke' has smoky violet flowers, and 'Carolina Moonlight' has butter yellow flowers. *Baptisia* is good in sun or part shade, and is very hardy.

Perennial *Geraniums* are such wonderful, versatile plants. They grow in full sun or in a fair amount of shade, and bloom for a long time. Fall foliage is generally colorful. A couple of new varieties sound interesting. Both are listed as blooming from June into September. 'Orkney Cherry' has bronze foliage and bright pink flowers. 'Sweet Heidy' has brilliant blue-purple flowers with a pink ring surrounding a white eye.

Eupatorium (Joe Pye Weed) is an excellent plant that puts on a great show in late summer with its soft mauve flower heads. The main drawback for most gardeners is that it gets 4-6' tall, so that it is just too big for many gardens. 'Baby Joe' and 'Phantom' are two new varieties of *Eupatorium* that grow to only 30 inches. They bloom for an extended time in the fall and the flowers attract butterflies.

Heucheras have become one of our most popular groups of plants, and for good reason. Different varieties provide splashes of colored foliage all season, from purple to pink, peach, gold, and silver. And some have outstanding coral bell flowers. 'Ginger Ale' adds another color to the group. Its ginger colored leaves contrast well with the darker varieties of *Heuchera*, and its ginger yellow flowers are a real surprise. Two other new varieties have compact, dark green foliage and outstanding flowers. 'Canyon Belle' has brilliant red flowers, and 'Canyon Duet' has showy pink and white bicolor flowers.

Trees and Shrubs: Our tree and shrub list continues to grow, with over 50 new varieties this year. Included are three new *Hydrangeas*. 'Little Lamb' is a real cutie, with diminutive, showy white flowers that dance above

a compact plant. We have 'Snow Mountain' in a tree form. It has large, very white flowers that are good for drying. 'Little Honey' is a new Oakleaf Hydrangea with yellow foliage that turns red in the fall. It is so new that we only have it in a small, 3-quart size.

Liquidamber 'Corky' is a Sweet Gum with interesting, corky bark. It displays an outstanding kaleidoscope of color in the fall.

New *Hibiscus* (Rose of Sharon) varieties are 'Lavender Chiffon', with large, single lavender flowers adorned with a lacy center, and 'Krystal Blue', with showy, single blue flowers all summer.

Aronia (Black Chokeberry) is a plant that deserves to be used much more. A new variety, 'Viking', is especially nice, with attractive, dark glossy leaves that turn a superb red autumn color. White flowers in spring yield in the fall to black berries which stay on the plant all winter. It grows 3-5' tall in sun or part shade.

More Good Reasons To Visit Princeton

As long as you are already coming to visit Hornbaker Gardens, you might want to look into some other good reasons to visit the Princeton area. Here are a few:

Hoffman's Patterns of the Past: This incredible shop, located at 513 S. Main, carries nearly every china pattern known to man. If you want to replace a couple of pieces from your grandmother's china, Hoffman's probably has them. In addition, it is one of nicest gift shops you will ever encounter. Their many gift collections include Swarovski Silver Crystal, the Heartwood Creek/Jim Shore collection, and Willow Tree figurines. Check out their website at www.patternsofthepast.com.

Annie's Little Pots: Annie Dittmer owns and operates a wonderful shop in Princeton's north end, at 906 N. Main. Annie works with stoneware and raku, creating vases, bowls, word tiles, necklaces, and whatever else might strike her fancy. This spring she will have a new line of birdbaths. Besides her own creations, the shop carries metal art, greeting cards, purses, water colors, and jewelry, all created by local artists.

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There are quite a few very interesting garden related pieces. Her website is www.annieslittlepots.com.

Festival 56: Summer stock theater is alive and well in Princeton, and is known as Festival 56 (named after Exit 56 on I-80). This will be Festival 56's fourth season of outstanding musicals and plays during July and August.

These are high quality productions and you can view a complete list of what's playing this summer at www.festival56.com, or call toll free 866-806-5656.

Bureau Creek Orchard: Keep this one in mind for a fall visit. Brothers Jeff and Jay Schenck planted a beautiful orchard several years ago, just west of Princeton off Rts. 6 & 34, and it is now fruiting heavily. They provide golf carts so that you can drive out into the orchard and pick your own if you wish. We bought some great Honey Crisp apples and picked several boxes of red raspberries there last fall. The shop has apples, cider, taffy apples, jams and all sorts of other fruit goodies. Their website is www.bureaucreekorchard.com.

Sherwood Antique Mall: Located in Princeton's north end, at 1661 N. Main, Sherwood Antique Mall contains a huge collection of antiques and collectibles (no crafts or reproductions) from over 200 dealers. Give yourself some time. There is a lot to see here.

Hunter's Ridge Golf Course: This fine 18-hole former private golf club is now a public course. It is located south-east of Princeton on Rt. 26. As the crow flies, it is just a mile north of Hornbaker Gardens, but more like three miles by car. The course is gorgeous and fun to play, with a few challenging holes. The clubhouse and dining facilities are located in a beautiful older building, nestled in a wooded area, a wonderful setting for lunch or supper. The food is very good and reasonably

priced. Dining facilities are sometimes closed to the public due to wedding receptions, especially on Saturdays in June, one would guess. For tee times and dining hours call 815-879-6531

Bureau County Historical Society Museum and Lovejoy Homestead: History buffs will enjoy visits to these two sites. The Museum is located at 109 Park Ave. West, just west of the courthouse in Princeton. It has been acknowledged as one of the very best of its kind in the country. Phone 815-875-2184 for information. Lovejoy Homestead is the home of Owen Lovejoy, the famous abolitionist preacher, and was a stop on the Underground Railroad. You can see where slaves hid on their journey to freedom. For more, see the website: www.lovejoyhomestead.com.

WEBSITE EVOLVING

All of our 2007 plant lists are now posted on our website, www.hornbakergardens.com. Also, bareroot hostas, irises and daylilies can be easily ordered online. We plan to make our website more helpful and informational during the next year by posting articles on various gardening topics. Much of this information is already there in past newsletters, but we plan to update and then post those articles in a more organized and user-friendly fashion.

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE



We accept

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