

## Renovating The Gardens

Dave and the crew are doing a major renovation of some of our display gardens this spring. The biggest renovation job involves the 150-foot stream that runs down to the pond in the front yard. That stream was installed around 15 years ago, and has held up very well. It was built using boulders that were relatively small. Dave has been itching to redo the stream, using larger boulders and some other creative ideas that he has been thinking about.

Right now, the front yard looks as if it has been bombed. The stream has been reshaped, using a mini excavator. It is nearly ready to lay the rubber liner into it, after which we will start placing the large boulders and finishing it off. Much of the plantings along the stream have been destroyed during the excavation, so we will enjoy landscaping with new plants after the stream is in place.

Both of our pondless waterfalls are also being renovated. There is a small one near the top of the Hosta Ravine above the gazebo, and one with a longer stream in the hillside gardens behind the main shopping area. Both were losing a little water so that we didn't have them running all the



time last season. That has given us a good excuse to rework them and make them better. A pondless waterfall (sometimes also referred to as a disappearing waterfall) is built similar to a pond, but the water goes into a pit filled with rock rather than into a pond. The water is recirculated to the top of the waterfall by a pump located in a vault, hidden in the pit.

We realize that our botanical gardens and arboretum, developed over the last 30 years, are not only attractions that our visitors enjoy strolling through, but they are excellent educational

tools. Our customers can see for themselves that the trees, shrubs and perennials that we sell do well in this area, and they can pick up some good ideas from what we have done in our gardens. We encourage you to bring a sack lunch, eat at our picnic tables, and take time to enjoy the gardens.

**Children's Garden:** When our beloved Kathy Hornbaker died, we knew right away that we wanted to honor her memory, and in particular her love of children, by creating a children's garden. Just west of the front yard, in a small ravine that was previously covered in weeds and brush, we are

creating that new space. We have been informally referring to it as the children's garden, but it will actually be more of a play area. This will evolve a little more slowly than the renovations to the existing gardens. We will undoubtedly add more elements to this area over the next few years.

For now, we plan on a rolling grassy area where children can romp and climb around. Plans include a slide and a small playhouse this year. Just getting this area shaped and seeded down will take some time, after which we can start adding the fun elements to it.

# NEW PLANTS

**Hostas:** You might think that, after 30 years of specializing in hostas, it would be hard for us to get excited about new hostas. But such is not the case. We have some very interesting new introductions this year.

We have two new yellow dwarfs. **'Munchkin Fire'** (\$18) is a vigorous grower with short, narrow leaves that hold their bright yellow color all season. **'Sun Mouse'** (\$15) has similar leaf shape and performance as the popular 'Blue Mouse Ears', but has brilliant yellow color. Both of these minis should make great edgers or small splashes of yellow in the shade garden.

A new hosta getting a lot of hype is **'First Blush'** (\$40), a medium small plant whose spring foliage will start to "blush" with reddish color, starting at the tips of the green leaves, and moving down toward the base. The blush holds until the temperatures go into the 90s. The red of the petioles extends onto the base of the leaves. This one is a big step towards a truly red hosta. Another medium small newby is **'Sunset Grooves'** (\$18), touted as being a showier version of 2013's Hosta of the Year, 'Rainforest Sunrise'. It has thick, round, bright yellow leaves with wide, dark green margins.

The aptly named **'Petticoat Junction'** (\$20) is a medium sized blue with very appealing, tight ruffles and twisted leaf tips. A must-have hosta for all you Cardinal fans out there is **'Stan the Man'** (\$25), a medium sized, somewhat puckered blue with creamy, bicolored margins.

Two medium large hostas sound exceptional. **'One Last Dance'** (\$18) is a sport of one of our favorite yellows, 'Dancing Queen'. This new sport has dark green centers and intense yellow margins, with irregular, wavy edges that give it a feathery look. **'Sugar Daddy'** (\$18), is a stunning sport of 'Big Daddy', with large, cupped and puckered blue leaves with white streaks and margins. Like its daddy, it has heavy substance and slug resistance.

**Perennials:** *Helleborus* is finally getting the attention and popularity it deserves, and growers have responded with lots of new varieties. Often referred to as Lenten Rose because it blooms so early, *Helleborus* is a great companion to hostas in the shade garden. The foliage generally has a bluish cast and is resistant to deer browsing, and the flowers range from white or yellow to pink and red. Plants are easy to grow and are hardy to Zone 4. We have around a dozen new varieties this year in the full range of colors.

Who could resist a plant called 'Charlotte's Web'? Not us. *Tradescantia* **'Charlotte's Web'** is a gold foliated Spiderwort that doesn't burn in the sun. Chartreuse leaves turn gold with sun exposure and the plant is covered with soft blue flowers in summer. It grows around 16 inches tall and is hardy to Zone 3.

Dark foliage is always intriguing. *Penstemon* **'Blackbeard'** features eggplant purple foliage on a very upright plant. Purple flower stems hold lilac purple flowers with white flaring tubes above the foliage, around 28-34" tall. Hardy to Zone 3.



Hosta 'One Last Dance'

Of course, there are some new *Echinaceas*, including two orange ones. One called **Sombrero® Adobe Orange** is touted as one of the best orange coneflowers yet. Its intense orange petals are matched by an orange cone. The other one, **Double Scoop™ Mandarin**, features large, orange pom pom flowers that gradually fade to pink. Both stand around 20" tall and are hardy to Zone 4.

We have several new *Heucheras* this year, including **'Black Pearl'**, touted as being the standard in black foliated *Heucheras*. Two new compact Coral Bells combine nicely colored flowers with interesting foliage.

**Dolce® Appletini** has lime green foliage with a silver overlay and beautiful ruby red flowers. **Dolce® Silver Gumdrop** has silver iridescent leaves and vibrant pink flowers.

#### Trees and shrubs:

A new **Japanese Maple, 'Red Dragon'**, is being promoted as the new standard in red foliated laceleaf maples. Its dark purple-maroon color holds well through the hot summer

months on a vigorous, well-branched tree. Another Japanese Maple, **'Sherwood Flame'**, is a new alternative to the usual 'Bloodgood'. It forms a nicely rounded, small tree around 15' tall and its red spring foliage turns reddish green in late summer, then cherry red in the fall.

**Prunus Pink Flair®** is an excellent small ornamental cherry offering multi-season color. Fragrant, bright pink blooms in spring are followed by attractive foliage that turns orange-red in the fall. It grows around 25' tall with a 15' spread, and is hardy to Zone 3.

You will probably hear a lot about a new *Hydrangea arborescens* called **Invincibelle® Ruby**. It is in the same family of hydrangeas as the old fashioned, white 'Annabelle', but it has dark red buds that open to a two-toned combination of bright ruby red and silvery pink. It reblooms until frost on sturdy stems with dark green foliage.

**Hibiscus Lil' Kim® Red** is a new dwarf Rose of Sharon that only gets around 3-4' tall. The long lasting flowers are a deep rose with a showy red eye.

New conifers include *Picea obovata* **'Arctos'**, a Siberian Spruce with unique bluish green color on a tough, durable pyramidal tree. Its moderate growth rate will result in a 10' tall tree in 10 years.

*Pinus peuce* **'Pacific Blue'** is a Macedonian Pine with beautiful, long, thin blue needles densely covering an upright tree. It is very wind and cold hardy, and should reach 20' in 10 years.



Penstemon 'Blackbeard'

# Calendar of Events

*All events are free unless otherwise noted. Please bring a lawn chair.*

**Saturday, April 22 at 10 am**

## **Spring Garden Maintenance:**

As the growing season gets started, we'll demonstrate how to divide a variety of perennials, including hostas, daylilies and grasses. Most perennials are hardy and easily divided. In addition, we'll share the proper pruning techniques for various shrubs, including hydrangeas, lilacs, spiraeas, and several others. Your shrubs can perform so much better with some regular, simple pruning.

**Saturday, May 6 at 10 am**

## **New Plants for 2017:**

The Hornbakers will show off new plants for this year, and tell why they are excited about them. Again this year, we want to treat you to breakfast! Join us at 9:30 for a delicious continental breakfast before learning about the new hostas, daylilies, perennials, annuals, and trees & shrubs for 2017!

**Saturday, May 13 at 10 am**

## **Kids' Containers for Mother's Day**

Here's a chance for the kids to come get their hands dirty and create something pretty for Mom, for Mother's Day. We'll give them some ideas, and help when needed, to get something potted up for Mom. They can bring their own container, and we will have a good selection of inexpensive containers available here. Cookies and lemonade will follow.

**Saturday, May 20 at 10 am**

## **Arboretum Walk**

The Hornbakers have been planting trees and shrubs on their 40 acres for over 30 years. Join Rich and Dave for a stroll around the grounds while they point out and discuss some of the highlights. Several varieties of Beech trees will be featured, along with many other unusual and standard plants, including conifers.

**Saturday, May 27 at 10 am**

**Miniature Gardens:** This is a hands-on workshop for all ages in which you will learn how to create and care for your very own miniature garden. Molly Hornbaker Blogg will provide information on how to get started and assist you along the way. You simply bring your creativity and ideas! Fee includes your container, soil, and plants. You pick out and purchase your choice of miniature accessories, at a special 20% discount for workshop participants. Reservations are required, so please call to reserve your spot. Fee: \$35.

**Saturday, June 3 at 10 am**

## **Sensational Succulents:**

Love succulents? We do! It's no wonder succulents continue to gain in popularity. Their varied colors and textures, unique shapes, and ease of care make them the perfect plants to add interest to any indoor or outdoor space. Come learn about these fun plants while we demonstrate techniques to make a variety of succulent gardens. Stay afterwards to create your own! We'll have all materials available for purchase and help guide you while you make your own creation.

**Friday, June 9 thru Sunday, June 11**

## **Open House and Hosta Walk!**

Join us for our annual open house. The hostas will 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 number of hostas.

**Saturday, June 10 at 10 am**

## **Pruning Perennials with Jane Morris**

**Saturday, June 10 at 1 pm**

## **Basic Garden Design with Jane Morris**

**Saturday, September 16 - 10 am to 4 pm**

## **5th annual Artisan Market**

# Perennial Of The Year

This year's Perennial Plant of the Year is not just one of our favorite native perennials, but one of our favorite perennial flowers, period. The Perennial Plant Association has named *Asclepias tuberosa* as the featured plant this year for many good reasons.

Better known as Butterfly Weed, *Asclepias* is an absolute butterfly magnet and serves as larval food for the Monarch butterfly. Bees and other insects are also attracted to the flowers, as are hummingbirds.

The eye-popping orange flowers are at home in prairie plantings as well as in formal gardens. Mass plantings are sensational, and the plant makes a great companion to many summer blooming perennials such as *Echinacea*, *Liatris*, *Salvia*, *Rudbeckia*, *Phlox* and daylilies. Butterfly weed grows around 2-3' tall with a spread of 2', and is hardy to Zone 4.

*Asclepias* is best sited in moderate to dry soils in full sun. It is drought tolerant, generally free of insect and disease problems, and is not attractive to deer. Mature plants are difficult to transplant and divide, so give thought to where you want them to be. Try not to disturb the roots very much when you set young plants into the garden and avoid over-watering them as they become established.



*Asclepias tuberosa*

## Hosta Of The Year



Hosta 'Brother Stefan'

The American Hosta Growers Association has named 'Brother Stefan' as the 2017 Hosta of the Year. This spectacular specimen is a medium-large plant with large, heavily corrugated, gold leaves with wide, dark green margins. Flowers are near white.

'Brother Stefan' is one of well-known hybridizer Olga Petryszyn's best introductions. It makes a great companion to similarly sized and corrugated, solid blue hostas such as 'Love Pat' or 'Blueberry Muffins'. Or consider surrounding 'Brother Stefan' with a mass of a smaller blue hosta such as 'Deep Blue Sea' or 'Fragrant Blue'.

### HOURS:

Through July 9, we will be open Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m. We will be closed on Easter Sunday, April 16. From July 10 through October 10, we will be open Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and we will be closed on Sundays.

# 10 Deer Resistant Perennials

Having the deer munch on your newly planted perennials is no fun. It's not just a problem for people who live in the country, as many of you in towns and suburbs can attest, especially if you live near a forest preserve. Here are ten hardy perennials that the deer don't like.



Monarda 'Pardon My Pink'

In general, perennials with fragrant foliage are not bothered by deer. At the same time, fragrance will attract beneficial pollinators, butterflies and hummingbirds.

*Monarda* (Bee Balm) has a minty fragrance that repels the deer. Plant one from the Leading Lady

series for early blooms and one from the Pardon My series for later blooms. *Nepeta* (Catmint) has fuzzy, fragrant foliage and puts on a good show with bright lavender purple blooms. We like the compact 'Cat's Meow'.

The several varieties of *Salvia* should be a staple in any garden. They are great pollinators, and the fragrant foliage is not preferred by deer. The two new Color Spires® series are especially nice. Cut back the blooms when they fade and get ready for another flush of blue flowers.

*Perovskia* (Russian Sage) and *Lavandula* (Lavender) are two more plants with fragrant foliage. 'Denim 'n Lace' is a tidy variety of Russian Sage whose bright amethyst blue flowers won't spill over onto its neighbors. We have

been impressed with the Lavender variety called 'Phenomenal', which forms a gorgeous clump of bright blue flowers 24" tall and wide.

The fine texture of most ornamental grasses is not attractive to deer. We have done several groupings and mass planting of grasses near our new Barn and in the Barn's parking lot, and have had no browsing from the deer. Switch Grass, Little Blue Stem, Prairie Drop Seed, and Fountain Grass all make good groupings.

*Veronica* (Speedwell) varieties don't attract the deer. Most have deep blue flowers, but you might try the new Magic Show® Pink Potion, a compact, baby pink new variety. *Amsonia* (Blue Star) can be planted in a grouping which will put on a beautiful show while avoiding deer damage.

*Baptisia* (False Indigo) won't get munched by the deer. The older varieties tend to be fairly large, but the new Decadence® series will stay shorter and more compact, and come in a broad range of colors.

For part shade and deer resistance, *Ligularia* is a good choice. 'Bottle Rocket' is an improved variety with large, serrated leaves and bright yellow flower spikes held above the foliage. It likes some afternoon shade and moisture.



Salvia Color Spires® 'Violet Riot'