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The Iris Field Must Go!

Yes, changes are coming to Hornbaker Gardens. As many of you have heard already, we have plans to put up a building to be able to host wedding receptions, reunions, meetings, and other community gatherings. We have a great spot for outdoor weddings to the west of the iris and daylily fields, and we receive numerous inquiries about hosting weddings and receptions. But we need a building in order to be able to plan events out here and know that the weather will not be a ruining factor.

The perfect place for this building happens to be right where the iris field is now. How fast we will be able to get a building up is unclear, but the first step is to get the iris field out of the way. This will be the last year for the iris field, which does not mean that we will be completely out of the iris business—but almost. We plan to hang on to perhaps 100 varieties with which we just can't bear to part. How we market those in the future will probably be the subject of

some experimentation, but chances are that we will try potting up some irises. In any event, this is the last year for the iris field, and your last chance to get most of the varieties that are out there, at least from us.

So here's the deal: We would rather sell these plants than compost them, and you deserve a deal to help us do that. If you buy \$30.00 worth of irises, you get a 20% discount. If you buy \$50.00 worth of irises or more, you get a 30% discount. Get 'em while you can!

Early season? Given the non-winter and the ridiculously warm spring that we are having, the iris season is apt to arrive early and go quickly. Let's hope that things cool off a bit so that the iris bloom season doesn't come and go before we know it. Watch our website for updates on the status of the iris season. You don't want to miss seeing the last year of this field in full bloom!





Events At Hornbaker Gardens

Kids' Containers for Mother's Day: Saturday, May 5, at 10:00 a.m.—Here's a chance for the kids to come get their hands dirty and create something pretty for Mom or Grandma, before Mother's Day. We'll give them some ideas, and then help them, as needed, to get something nice potted up. They can bring their own container, and we will try to have a good selection of inexpensive containers available here. Cookies and lemonade will follow.

Photography by Nicole Isaacson: Saturday, May 19, 9-12 and 2-5, and Sunday, May 20, 2-5. Professional photographer, Nicole Isaacson will be here to take pictures of groups up to four people (additional charge for more than four). This is a great opportunity to get a family photo in our beautiful garden setting. Nicole will provide a 15-20 minute session, 5 high resolution files, one 5x7 print, and 25% off additional purchases....all for \$150. Pre-payment required. Please call Nicole at 815-878-6406 to book a session time.

New Plants For 2012

You can find a complete list of new plants for 2012 on our website, but here are some that we find especially interesting:

Hostas: After 25 years in this business, I still get excited about the new hostas. We have over 20 new varieties this year. Perhaps the showiest new hosta this year is 'Hudson Bay' (\$20.00), a medium sized hosta which has creamy white centers and wide, bright blue margins with apple green streaks jetting into the centers. A showy, but smaller, hosta is 'Pure Heart' (\$20.00), a creamy centered sport of the popular 'Blue Mouse Ears'. Cute, rounded leaves with excellent substance should make this new variety a great companion to its parent plant.

'Regal Supreme' (\$18.00) is a sport of the older, but always popular 'Krossa Regal'. 'Regal Supreme' forms the same huge, upright clump of frosty blue leaves with wavy, ivory white margins. A mature clump of this is going to be a stunner.

The whimsically named 'Wheee!' (\$18.00) is a medium small hosta that has been selected to be in the Proven Winners line of plants. It is green with white margins, but what makes it

different is the fact that the leaves are extremely wavy all the way from the crown out to the leaf tips.

It is impossible not to be drawn to the showy, variegated hostas, but I love it when a "plain" colored hosta makes me stop in my tracks and take notice because of its classy gracefulness and subtle beauty. I'm expecting 'Cup of Grace' (\$20.00) to be the new hosta that does that to me this year. Its very dark green leaves are nicely cupped and held on very upright stems. White flowers held above the dark green foliage make for a nice contrast.

Daylilies: New daylilies include two rebloomers. 'Scottish Fantasy' has large, fragrant, coral pink blooms with a sunny yellow watermark and lime green throat. The petals have nice piecrust ruffling on the margins. 'Stephanie Returns' is a shorter, but earlier, daylily with a unique bicolor blend of light peachy pink on ruffled petals with a purple eye and deeper rose purple sepals. A yellow throat sets off the colors nicely.

A Proven Winner selection, 'Primal Scream' is 34" tall with huge, 8-inch, tangerine orange, gold dusted blooms with twisted, ruffled petals. A daylily

with the name 'Primal Scream' should be a real attention grabber. All three of these new varieties are priced at \$15.00.

Perennials: Intersectional peonies are gaining in recognition and popularity each year. They are crosses between tree peonies and regular garden peonies. They grow like garden peonies, dying back to the ground each year, but sport flower characteristics and colors more like the tree peonies, along with a somewhat longer bloom season. They are strong growers and should require no staking.

We have three new **intersectional peonies** this year, all priced at \$39.99. 'Canary Brilliants' has creamy yellow double blooms with rose centers. 'Cora Louise' has large, double to semi-double, lavender pink flowers with darker flares. 'Scarlet Heaven' has glowing scarlet, single blooms.

If you have thought that **Hibiscus** is not very hardy, think again. Today's hybrids are listed as hardy to Zone 4. They are late to emerge from the ground in the spring because they need the heat to get them going, so one must

New Plants For 2012

Continued



Yellow Tradescantia pops in the spring

New Plants For 2012

Continued

be careful to know where they are in the spring so that you don't accidentally slice them off while digging or hoeing around. But these stately aristocrats of the summer garden can really put on a show with their huge, dinner plate sized flowers. We have six new varieties for you this year. Their names pretty well describe them: 'Berrylicious', 'My Valentine', 'Peppermint Schnapps', 'Pink Elephant', 'Summer Storm', and 'Tie Dye'.

Impressive new varieties of **Heuchera** (Coral Bells) just keep coming. 'Cajun Fire' has foliage that changes color with the seasons: red in spring, black in summer, and maroon in fall. 'Delta Dawn' has large, round, lime colored leaves with red centers in the spring and fall, and prominent red veins in summer. 'Midas Touch' is a vigorous grower with seersucker, ruffled and fluted peach and gold foliage.

Two new *Heucheras* give you both interesting foliage and nice flowers. The hummingbirds love these Coral Bells, by the way. 'Cherry Cola' has rust red leaves and cherry red flowers. 'Fire Chief' has glowing wine red foliage with bi-colored pink and white flowers blooming continuously through spring, summer and fall. The hummingbirds

should love that one!

This morning, I noticed that the brightest foliage emerging from the ground in the front yard is a yellow **Tradescantia**. It is an older variety called 'Sweet Kate', which has been improved upon with a new variety called 'Sunshine Charm'. The new 'Sunshine Charm' is more compact, at around 18 inches, and is more resistant to sunburn. It has lavender pink flowers throughout the summer and can be grown in sun or shade. The spiky foliage is an eye-popping, bright yellow that gives you some great color in the garden very early in the season.

Baptisia belongs in almost every garden, except the smallest of gardens. It forms an attractive, vase shaped mound of blue-green foliage around 3' tall, with vibrant flowers in the spring. Three new varieties are 'Blueberry Sundae', 'Dutch Chocolate', and 'Lemon Meringue', which sport indigo blue, chocolate purple, and lemon yellow flowers, respectively.

The Coneflower parade continues unabated, as the hybridizers constantly work to improve the vigor, branching and colors of the new **Echinaceas**. We have ten new varieties. Take a look at our list online for the names and descriptions of these pink, lavender, orange and red varieties.

One interesting development worth mentioning here is 'Little Annie', a new dwarf Purple Coneflower that stands only 10-12" tall.

Trees and Shrubs: A new variety of red twiggled dogwood has captured our interest. *Cornus sanguinea* 'Arctic Sun' is a nice looking shrub for sun to part shade, standing 3-4' tall. In winter, the rich yellow stems, tipped with bright red, make a great show. It is a reliable Zone 4 plant.

Hypericum (St. John's Wort) is a shrub that deserves to be used more. It makes an excellent understory shrub. *Hypericum kalmianum* 'Blue Velvet', is a new variety with attractive blue foliage and numerous golden-yellow flowers in mid-summer. It grows 2-3' tall and wide and is hardy to Zone 4.

For conifer fans, we have two new varieties of *Pinus parviflora* (Japanese White Pine). 'Bergmani' is a collector's gem with red pollen cones in spring, contrasting with long, twisted, blue-green needles. It has a compact, rounded shape as a young tree, developing into a wide, irregular, upright habit. 'Kinpo' is a unique and irregular dwarf with a spreading form and twisted, brush-like clusters of bluish needles. It would look great in a raised setting.

Brunnera 'Jack Frost' Is 2012 Perennial Plant Of The Year

The Perennial Plant Association has named *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' as the 2012 Perennial Plant of the Year. Common names for this outstanding shade plant include Siberian bugloss, heartleaf brunnera, and false forget-me-not. This year's award winner is a great combination of foliage and flowers.

Regular *Brunnera macrophylla* is one of the first perennials that we ever started growing, and it remains a staple for use in shady areas. The heart shaped leaves form an attractive mound about the size of a basketball. The foliage has a slight fuzziness to it, which makes it less attractive to browsing deer. What makes 'Jack Frost' such a scene stealer is the frosty silver foliage veined with light green, and resembling cracked porcelain.



In the spring, the plant sends up multiple stems which support a cloud of bright, light blue flowers above the foliage. The flowers resemble the true forget-me-not flowers of *Myosotis scirpioides*.

Brunnera grows best in shady areas with good moisture retentive soils, making it a great companion to hostas, ferns, epimediums, hellebores, and heucheras, which like those same conditions. Using 'Jack Frost' in the same garden with Japanese painted ferns provides a nice combination of textural contrast and color echoing.

Brunnera 'Jack Frost' is extremely hardy (Zone 3). This hardiness, together with great shows from both foliage and flower, make 'Jack Frost' one of the best possible additions to the shade garden and a great choice for Perennial of the Year.

Open House And Hosta Walk

Our annual Open House and Hosta Walk will be held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 8, 9 and 10. 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 around July 1 and runs for the next three weeks. Some ornamental **grasses** plume out as early as July or August, while most of the spectacular *Miscanthus* varieties plume out in September and early October.

Daylily \$10 Clump Sale

Every year, we take on 20 or 30 new varieties of hostas, so we try to eliminate the same number of varieties so that we don't have an ever expanding number of hostas potted up without the room to store and display them. With daylilies, most of which we sell out of the field, rather than potted, we haven't been as diligent about eliminating varieties—we have just left them out in the field, even though we constantly add new varieties every year.

We need to get our daylily varieties down to a more manageable number. And we need to make some room for



'Janice Brown'--
\$10.00/clump

the iris varieties that we plan to keep. So Molly has made a list of over 160 varieties of daylilies that we will be selling off in fresh dug clumps for \$10.00 each. Clumps like these are regularly \$25.00 to \$35.00. These will be available from the day we open. When they are gone, they're gone.

To get a list of these varieties, go to our website, select the Daylilies tab, scroll down to the bottom right of the page to click on "Daylily Closeout Sale 2012". Then, use the website to see pictures of any variety you might be interested in. You can also browse the photo album out here at the Gardens. Closeout clumps are available on a cash and carry basis at the Gardens only.

'Liberty' Is Hosta Of The Year

The American Hosta Growers Association has named 'Liberty' as the 2012 Hosta of the Year. Easily one of the showiest hostas in the garden, 'Liberty' is a sport of the popular 'Sagae'. Its frosty green leaves are bordered with wide, bright yellow margins that lighten even further, to a creamy white, as the season progresses. Whereas 'Sagae' forms a monster clump, 'Liberty' forms a medium-large clump between three and four feet in diameter. Lavender flowers sit above the foliage later in the summer.

'Liberty' is a show stopper without any help, but we like to put a blue hosta on either side of it, or plant a mass of a red foliated Heuchera such as 'Plum Pudding' around it, to really make it pop. You won't go wrong making 'Liberty' the centerpiece of a shady area.



'Liberty'

Using "Sister" Hostas

I'm often asked to help people pick out hostas to ring a tree or to fill that strip of ground between the driveway or sidewalk and the foundation. In those situations, I turn to reliable groups of hostas that I call "sister" hostas—those that are genetically related to one another. I also like to use the word "family" because there is often a parent plant that has produced several sports.

Actually, when ringing a tree with hostas or filling a limited strip of ground, it looks great to use just one variety. That way, you are sure to get a uniform look of color, clump size and leaf shape. However, if you want to spice it up a bit, you can still get that uniformity of color, size and leaf shape by choosing sister hostas that will complement each other well. What you probably want to avoid is a random collection of hostas that are good hostas, individually, but which don't work well together, often because they grow into different sized clumps.

A great example of related hostas is the 'Halcyon' family. 'Halcyon' is a powdery blue hosta that produced such outstanding sports as 'First Frost', 'June', 'Autumn Frost' (actually a sport of 'First Frost'), El Nino, and May. Ringing a tree with two each of 'Halcyon' (blue), 'First Frost' (blue with gold margins), and 'June' (gold with blue margins) is a guaranteed success. They will all form medium sized clumps with the same leaf shape and complementary colors.

The 'Rainforest Sunrise' family is a good group of medium small hostas that includes 'Rainforest Sunrise' (orange gold with green margins), 'Tropical Sunrise' (green with gold margins), and 'Maui Buttercups' (gold). Although it is not actually related to this family, I like to declare 'Deep Blue Sea' as an adopted member of the family. It adds a great blue to the mix, and has nice cupping like the others.

The 'Guacamole' sisters include the full figured trio of 'Guacamole' (gold with green margins), 'Fried Green



Hosta 'June'



'First Frost'

Tomatoes' (green), and 'Fried Bananas' (gold).

There are some good sister combinations where one variety is a single color and the other is variegated. Examples include 'Krossa Regal' and 'Regal Splendor' (or the new 'Regal Supreme'), 'Zounds' and 'Dick Ward', 'Choo Choo Train' and 'Journey's End', and 'Glory' and 'Old Glory'.

Other good sister combinations exist where two hostas are the "reverse" of each other—for example one is green with gold margins, and the other is gold with green margins. Sisters like this include montana 'Aureomarginata' and 'On Stage', 'Paul's Glory' and 'Glory Hallelujah', 'Last Dance' and 'Dance with Me', and 'Pineapple Punch' and 'Pineapple Upsidedown Cake'.

One must be a little careful about assuming that a sport of one hosta will be the same size as the original. This is especially true when the sport has a lot less green in it than the parent plant. For example, 'Fire and Ice' is a white centered sport of 'Patriot', which is green with white margins. Because it has so much white in it, 'Fire and Ice' is a slower grower that will not be as large as 'Patriot'.

I will try to find time to make a more comprehensive list of good sister combinations to post on our blog and make available as a handout here at the Gardens and as a printout on our website's hosta page.



Fairy Garden

Fairy Garden Madness

Molly, our whole retail staff, and many of our customers have come down with an obsession for fairy gardens that is similar to the sickness that many of us “hostaholics” have. We now have a whole section of the Shop devoted to fairy garden accessories. Several new suppliers are providing us with a steady stream of unbelievably cute items to add those special touches to your fairy garden.

WORKSHOPS “Gardening Together”

We’re all in this gardening thing together, and learning from one another as we go. What’s wonderful is that there is always more to learn. This year, we are hosting a series of Saturday morning workshops that we call “Gardening Together”. We’ll try to keep the workshops short and to the point, but you may want to bring along lawn chairs. All of the workshops are free.

Dividing Perennials:

Saturday, April 21,
at 10:00 a.m. —

Rich will discuss and demonstrate when and how to divide a variety of perennials, including hostas, daylilies and grasses.

Pruning Hydrangeas and Other Shrubs:

Saturday, April, 28, at 10:00 a.m. —

Spring is the time to prune most hydrangeas. However, different families or groups of hydrangeas have their own pruning requirements, so it pays to know which type of hydrangea you have. Rich and Dave Hornbaker will demonstrate proper pruning techniques for hydrangeas and other shrubs.

Fairy Gardens:

Saturday, May 12, at 10:00 a.m. — Molly Hornbaker Blogg will present a workshop on how to make a Fairy Garden for your home. Fairy Gardens can be created in their own special garden box, but you can get creative with all sorts of containers, or even make a fairy garden in a special spot right in the ground. We have a huge selection of mini accessories and the perfect plants that will stay small and not grow too quickly.

Cut Flower Arranging:

Saturday, May 19, at 10:00 a.m. — Learn the basics of flower arranging from David Hornbaker, who is always bringing fresh arrangements into the house. We will have a

supply of fresh-cut material and some inexpensive florist vases on hand for 20 people to make small arrangements to take home. Please call ahead to reserve a spot for that portion of the workshop. The only charge will be for the vase (something like \$5.00).

Kathy O’Malley on Photography in the Garden:

Saturday, May 26, at 10:00 a.m. — Former WGN radio personality (of Kathy and Judy fame), avid gardener, and our friend, Kathy O’Malley, will share some outdoor photography tips. Hornbaker Gardens is the perfect spot to explore the art of outdoor photography. Kathy’s photos are always interesting and show her creative flair, and she is so much fun to listen to.

Pottery Water Features:

Saturday, June 2, at 10:00 a.m. — Just about any piece of pottery or other container can be turned into an attractive, bubbling water feature. David Hornbaker will show you how. Bubblers give you a relatively inexpensive way to have an outstanding water feature in your garden or next to, or on, your patio.

Pruning Perennials with Jane Morris:

Saturday, June 9, at 10:00 a.m. — Jane Morris, previously our head gardener for 12 years, says that early June is the ideal time to take out the pruners to pinch and cut back perennials to control height and shape and make for sturdier, more floriferous plants, thus preventing sprawling plants and the need to stake. Jane has started her own business, The Gardening Governess, advising clients on pruning and other general gardening techniques and timing. This workshop will be a good example of her excellent advice.