



Notes from

HORNBAKER GARDENS

"The Princeton Perennial People"

22937 1140 N. Ave., Princeton, Illinois 61356

NEWSLETTER No. 17

(815) 659-3282

MARCH 2002

Retail Hours

We have decided to set April 10 as our opening date and make that our regular opening date each year, no matter what day of the week it falls on. So starting April 10, we will be open seven days a week, Monday through Saturday 8:00 to 5:00, and Sunday 12:00 to 5:00. We will be open through October 13. (We haven't decided whether we want to set a regular closing date.)

Please note that we will be **closed** July 4 and Labor Day (September 2).

OPEN HOUSE AND HOSTA WALK

We will hold our fifteenth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on June 7, 8 and 9, when the hostas are looking their best. Refreshments will be served, and drawings for prizes will be held each day. We will also have a selection of specially priced plants.

A River Runs Through It

Those of you who receive our Pond Talk newsletter have already read about our new display pond, but we are so excited about it that we couldn't help but make it the lead article in both newsletters. You "ponders" can go ahead and skip to the What's New article.

We really got carried away last October. Mike Saylor (our pond guy) and I (Rich) decided that we needed a really serious pond in the front yard. Mike jumped on the skid steer, and within 24 hours our children's whiffle ball field was replaced by a hole 40 feet in diameter and three and half feet deep. Except that we used a machine for the majority of the digging, this pond was built just the way that we build ponds for our customers. It is shelved so that marginal plants can be planted in shallow water around the edge. There are five large plant pockets built into the second shelf, in which we planted 15 water lilies. The rubber liner was covered with rocks and gravel. We ran three hoses into the pond and start-

ed filling it, which took 36 hours—some 20,000 gallons.

The River: Then we went up the hill, 150 feet from the pond, and installed the Biofalls. Mike got his artistic juices flowing and started digging the stream and waterfalls. When he was done, we had a stream containing eight waterfalls, a rapids, and an island. The stream starts up in the sunny display gardens and winds and splashes back down to the pond. It is fed by two pumps, located in the pond skimmer, each pump pushing out 5000 gallons per hour.

Now we have a major landscape job on our hands for this spring, in order to finish it off. The stream really does a nice job of tying the sunny display beds up on the hill to the landscaping around our house. A couple of bridges will have to be built in order to get across to the other side of the stream. We also built a screened-in front porch onto the front of the house right next to the pond. You pond lovers are going to like this one!

Mark Your Calendars: Workshops, peak blooms

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.

FREE WORKSHOPS

Dividing Perennials: We will hold our annual workshop on dividing perennials on Saturday, April 20, at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss and demonstrate when and how to dig, divide, and replant various perennials, including

hostas and daylilies. The workshop is designed to show gardeners that most perennials are hardy and easily divided, and help them overcome their fear of hurting the plant in the process. No reservations are required.

Trees and Shrubs: Woody ornamentals are higher priced purchases than perennials, and most customers aren't familiar with any but the most common trees and shrubs. This often leads to a

reluctance to try something different. Our Tree and Shrub Workshop, which we will hold on Saturday, April 27, is designed as a consumer's short course. We'll discuss several different groups of plants, and try to point out varieties that are ornamental and easy to grow. We'll discuss varieties for sun or for shade, varieties for good flowering or for fall color. Holton "Bud" Rosenquist will be on hand, and he and I (Rich) will

continued on back

hornbakergardens.com Arrives

By the time you receive this newsletter, our website, hornbakergardens.com, should be online. There you will be able to view and download our various pricelists. The lists for hostas, daylilies, irises, and grasses are ready now. Order forms can be downloaded for those of you who live some distance away and wish to order hostas, daylilies and irises through the mail. We will soon have a complete listing of all the other perennials, and another for trees and shrubs.

We have not included a plant list in this newsletter. The information on the website will include descriptions and prices, so a simple listing of plants seems inadequate in comparison.

We have never tried to promote our mail order business. We would much prefer that you come here so that we can visit with you and let you enjoy our display gardens. And that continues to be the case. We hope that the website will be a convenience to existing customers,

in that you will be able to view and download our price lists (and save us the time and expense of mailing them). It will also be helpful to new and potential customers, in that they can check out what we carry, get maps, directions, and hours, and generally get a feel for what we are all about.

So check out our site and pass the word. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

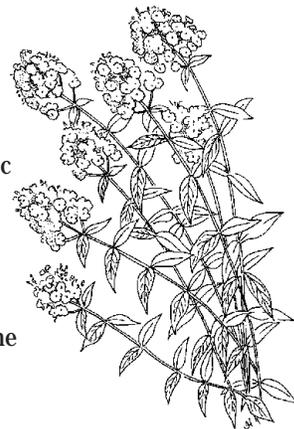
Perennial Of The Year

The Perennial Plant Association has selected Phlox 'David' as the 2002 Perennial of the Year. 'David' is a tall phlox (*paniculata* type) standing 36-40 inches tall with pure white flower panicles 6 to 9 inches long. Bloom period can extend from July through September if the old flowers are removed as they fade.

'David' is known for its powdery mildew resistance. However, as with other varieties of tall phlox, powdery mildew can be reduced, and plant vigor maintained, by dividing the plant every three years or so.

Tall phlox should be planted in full sun to part shade and grows

best in moist but well-drained soil containing good organic matter. The flowers of 'David' are quite fragrant, as well as beautiful, making it an excellent choice for the perennial border.



Dividing Your Hostas

We are often asked how often hostas should be divided and what time of year is best to do the dividing. In general, hostas don't need to be divided at all. Many of the hostas in our display beds were planted 10-15 years ago and have never been divided. The main reasons to divide hostas are that they have grown too large for the spot they are in (because we all tend to plant them too close together for the size that they will achieve in five years), or you want to have more clumps of the same plant to make a border, plant elsewhere, or share with friends.

Hostas can be divided anytime during the growing season, but spring or fall dividing is preferable to summer. We like to divide in the spring in April when the plant is just starting to poke its tips out of the ground. At this stage, the plant has no foliage to support while it gets its new roots established. Roots will develop quickly in the spring. Older plants can be quartered with a knife or sharp spade, or cut into even smaller chunks, depending on how many plants you want and the extent to which you wish to downsize

the plant. The smaller the divisions, the longer it will take the plant to grow back to maturity.

With younger or more expensive plants, you might wish to take a hose nozzle and wash all of the dirt off of the roots before you start to divide it. This way, you will be better able to see where cuts should be made, and it might make it possible to simply pull the divisions

apart, rather than cutting them, thereby destroying less of the existing root system.

Fall division is also easily done. Early September is a good time. Just cut all of the existing foliage off during the process. The divisions will have a couple of months to get their root systems reestablished before the onset of winter. They will even make some new leaves.

Hosta Of The Year

The American Hosta Growers Association has named 'Guacamole' as the Hosta of the Year for 2002. 'Guacamole' is a large hosta with large, rounded leaves on long stems. The foliage is gold with dark green edges, with the variegation becoming more pronounced as the season progresses.

Besides its excellent foliage, 'Guacamole' is known for its large, fragrant flowers, which are white, tinged with lavender. Good sister hostas to grow with 'Guacamole' would be 'Fragrant Bouquet' (from which 'Guacamole' is a sport), and Fried

Bananas and Fried Green Tomatoes (both of which are sports of 'Guacamole'). 'Fragrant Bouquet' is apple green with white edges, 'Fried Bananas' is bright yellow, and 'Fried Green Tomatoes' is a rich, shiny green. All of these plants are vigorous growers that quickly grow to the same large size, their colors blend together well, and they all have the same fragrant flower.

A newer hosta, also worth mentioning with this group, is 'Stained Glass', a selection of 'Guacamole' that shows a more pronounced variegation earlier in the season.

What's New At Hornbaker Gardens?

Hostas: Naturally, we have lots of new hostas this year. In fact, our price sheet now contains over 550 varieties, including 48 new ones. Some of the new offerings are varieties that we have been propagating for a few years in order to build our supply, and several are newer varieties which we have bought in. One of the older varieties that we have been growing for several years, and can now offer for sale, is 'Wrinkles and Crinkles', which has wavy, unruly, corrugated blue foliage.

'Jewel of the Nile' is a new variety that is a 'Blue Cadet' with yellow edges. 'Manhattan' has large green leaves with extreme texture and nice ruffling. 'Sweet Home Chicago' is a fast growing yellow with green edges (a sport of 'Birchwood Parky's Gold'). 'Thunderbolt' sounds very interesting. It is a *sieboldiana* 'Elegans' with narrow golden centers, turning to creamy white. For you lovers of streaked hostas, check our 'Savannah Supreme', a sensationally streaked form of 'Savannah', including fragrant flowers.

Iris: We obtained four new varieties last fall that are touted as being reliable rebloomers. The rebloomers bloom during the regular iris season, then bloom again in the fall, anywhere from late August to late October or early November. It is downright weird, but definitely fun, to bring a bouquet of blooming irises into the house (or see them blooming in the garden, for that matter)

in October. The new rebloomers include 'Clarence', which has bluish white standards and blue-violet falls; 'Earl of Essex', which has large white flowers with purple plicata markings; 'Harvest of Memories', a yellow self; and 'Queen Dorothy', another white with purple plicata stitching. These four join the four reblooming varieties that we already carry: 'Belvi Cloud', blue and white; 'Belvi Queen', brown and white; 'Immortality', a white self; and 'Total Recall', a yellow self.

A couple of other new tall bearded irises are absolutely "heavenly". 'Here's Heaven' is a pure white self, and 'Stairway to Heaven' is a sensational blue amoena (white standards and blue falls).

Grasses: Everyone wanted Miscanthus 'Bitsy Ben' last year, but we didn't have enough to sell. Now we do. It is a cute little four-footer that plumes out in early September and has good fall color. Another new Miscanthus that sounds really good is 'Huron Sunrise', a hardy variety from Canada which stands 5-6' tall and plumes out profusely in mid-August.

Perennials: New perennials include Heuchera 'Jade Gloss', a coral bell with leaves that are almost entirely glossy silver with a dark green tracery of veins. Pink flowers top it off. Leucanthemum 'Crazy Daisy' is a shasta daisy with unusual and varied flowers that are frilled, quilled, or twisted. We have some

new peonies, including two named varieties of tree peonies from Japan. 'Kamatanishiki' is a double wisteria blue with lighter edges. 'Kinkaku' is a fully double orange.

Trees and Shrubs: Two trees that have been difficult to get, especially in smaller, more affordable sizes, will be available this year. Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) is a hardy version of its Sequoia cousin. Larch (*Larix*) 'Diana' is a very narrow tree with contorted branches, giving it a very Japanese look. Both of these trees are deciduous conifers with very soft, touchable foliage.

New trees include a couple of Ginkgos, 'Princeton Sentry' and 'Autumn Gold'. We'll also have some Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*), contorted Willow (*Salix* 'Scarlet Curls'), and Sassafras trees, all three in smaller, starter sizes. We'll have some good-sized English and Scarlet Oaks. There are three different forms of Katsura trees coming in: single stemmed, multi-stemmed, and weeping.

A couple of newer shrubs show lots of promise. A true dwarf Burning Bush (*Euonymus alata*) 'Rudy Haag' grows only 3-5' tall with consistent red fall color. We only have it in a small, starter size, but we look for it to become very popular. Weigela 'Wine and Roses' has rich, dark burgundy-purple foliage with intense rosy-pink colored flowers. It has great foliage color all year.

Spring Maintenance Tips



Here are a few tips to help you maintain your perennial garden. First tip: Go back a couple of months and start exercising regularly. OK, it's too late for that, so we'll just have to ease into this spring gardening thing somewhat gradually.

Grasses: The clumps of grasses can be cut back to a few inches now. Be careful because the blades of grass can be sharp. A good way to cut them is to use twine to tie the clump fairly tightly halfway up. Then take a power hedge clipper, or even a chain saw, and cut the clump off, leaving a few inches of stubble. The tied-up clump is then easily picked up and disposed of.

Pruning flowering shrubs: Spring flowering shrubs are generally best pruned right after they bloom. Next spring's blooms will come from the growth that take place after pruning this year, so the sooner you get to it after they finish blooming, the better.

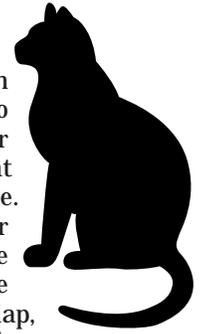
Most summer flowering shrubs bloom on this year's growth, so they can be pruned in late winter or early spring. The height of hydrangeas can be controlled by cutting them back at this time. Potentilla will grow more compactly, and look much less leggy, if it is trimmed back in early spring. Even the later blooming spireas can be trimmed back in early spring.

By pruning at the proper times, you will allow your shrubs time to develop flowering growth that will look graceful and natural, rather than stiff and overly manicured.

Isabel Bloom Is Back

Isabel Bloom is wholesaling again, so we will be carrying a selection of sculptures, including some of the newer pieces. These hand finished concrete sculptures have always been popular with our customers, and many make beautiful garden accents.

Frankie The Cat Moves In



Our pets have always been popular with our customers, especially with children. We have a new arrival, and you are apt to meet him the next time you visit. Frankie is a cat that belonged to Kathy's niece Teresa. Teresa gave him to us when she moved into an apartment where pets were not allowed.

Frankie is the boldest, friendliest, most curious and fearless cat that has ever called our place its home. He was from a late summer litter, so he is only about half grown. He has long black fur with unusual gray tufts protruding from

behind each ear. He thinks that every door that is opened is opened for him, and he sprints through it, whether it be the door to our house or one of the other buildings, or the door to a visitor's car. Kathy was on her way to town the other day when Frankie came out from under the car seat and startled her by jumping into her lap.

He loves people, so we expect that he will be hanging around the retail area most of the time once we are open. Our fear is that he won't have sense enough to keep from getting run over by a car, or

that he will ride off in a customer's car. So we apologize now for any return trips that Frankie may cause. You won't get far before you realize he is in your car, since he will soon be on your lap, expecting to be petted.

Also, please don't mention to any of our other cats that Frankie had his own article in this spring's newsletter. They are jealous enough as it is.

Workshops, peak blooms

continued from page 1

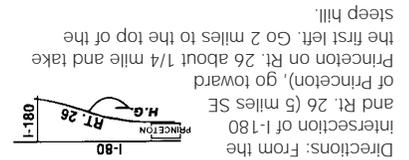
give a brief demonstration on how to plant your trees and shrubs. This is a broad topic, with lots of information, but we will plan to hold it to an hour (to no more than an hour and a half). Then, we will hang around to answer any particular questions that you might have. No advance registration is necessary.

Grasses: We will hold two workshops on grasses, one in the spring and one in the

fall. The spring workshop will be held on Saturday, May 4, at 10:00 a.m., and the fall workshop will be on Saturday, September 21, also at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss how and where to use grasses, as well as how and when to plant, fertilize, divide, and maintain grasses. No advance registration is necessary.

Aquatic Plants: A pond opens up a whole new area of gardening. On

Saturday, May 11, we will hold a workshop to discuss aquatic plants. We will discuss water lilies, lotus, and marginal plants, including both hardy and tropical varieties. Plants are such an important element in maintaining a clean, attractive pond. We'll discuss planting techniques, fertilization requirements, winter care, and general maintenance. No advance registration is necessary.



GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE



We accept

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