



Notes from

HORNBAKER GARDENS

"The Princeton Perennial People"
22937 1140 N. Ave., Princeton, Illinois 61356

NEWSLETTER No. 25

(815) 659-3282

MARCH 2004

www.hornbakergardens.com

RETAIL HOURS

(Closed Sundays)

We have decided to set April 10 as our opening date each year and October 10 as our last day to be open each year (providing that neither of those days is a Sunday), in order to make it easy to remember. Our hours will be 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Saturday. We will be closed on Sundays.

Please note that we will be closed on Labor Day (September 6).

OPEN HOUSE AND HOSTA WALK

We will hold our seventeenth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 10, 11, and 12, 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.

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.

Bronzes, Bells, And Rusty Critters

During the off season, we ran across a few new items that we just couldn't resist. The first is a collection of bronze sculptures that we found at a trade show. "Nina", the girl lying on her stomach, reading a book, has been an admired sculpture that we have had on display for three years. Now, she will have seven new children's sculptures to go along with her.

Three of the new pieces are of children reading. One is of a girl with a cat in her lap. There is a toddler reaching, a reclining boy, and a girl in a swimsuit, a picture of which is shown here.

Some of these new pieces are a bronze color, some in a verde shade, and some in



a tri-color patina. We know that you will enjoy seeing this intriguing collection of children.

Bells: This February, Kathy and I went to visit Kathy's brother Dan in Portland, Oregon. While there, we visited Portland's Japanese Garden. The garden was, of course, beautiful, even in February. But two metal bells really caught our attention. They were made from the cut off tops of the tall, slender gas tanks that are used for welders and torches. They come in various powder coated

colors, and each has a stainless steel Japanese symbol (peace, harmony, tranquility, etc.) welded on the outside surface of the bell.

A hard rubber clapper hangs inside the bell, with leather thongs hanging below the bottom of the bell. The bell is rung by

continued on back

What's New?

You can see a complete listing of all of our new plants on our website, www.hornbakergardens.com. Just click on the words "New Plants" on the right hand side of the home page. Here is a sample of the new plants that have us excited:

Hostas: Late last summer we got a new streaky one in called 'Lightning Strikes'. It is reputed to be quite stable, and the streaky white on medium to dark

green is striking. There are two new large hostas, both of which are related to the excellent nigrescens 'Elatior'. 'Mardi Gras' is an impressive specimen with large, dark green leaves with creamy white margins. It is a cross between 'Elatior' and 'Christmas Tree'. 'Victory' is an attractively margined sport of 'Elatior'.

Iris: Our friend Jean Panier, from *continued on page 2*

What's New? AT HORNBAKER GARDENS

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Granville, Illinois, has been growing irises a lot longer than we have. Last spring she mentioned that she had some good varieties in her garden that she thought we should have, so we traded some plants with her. We have a dozen new varieties, including 'Rosette Wine', a ruffled and laced raspberry-rose masterpiece with a white zonal spot at the center of the falls. 'Night Ruler' and 'Satin Satan' are a couple of near-blacks. 'American Classic' is a nicely ruffled white with deep blue-violet plicata markings. 'Speed Limit' is a medium blue with white areas around white beards and up the midribs, and is supposed to rebloom.

Daylilies: Last summer, we decided to eliminate around 100 varieties of daylilies to make room for some newer, nicer varieties. We have 22 new ones to offer this year. 'Awesom Blossom' is a shocking rose with a plum eye and edge. 'Bela Lugosi' has huge, dark purple flowers with lime green throats. It is named for the actor who played Count Dracula in the 1950's. 'Blueberry Candy' is a ruffled creamy white with a striking violet eye. It was hybridized by Stamile, who also hybridized the very popular 'Strawberry Candy', which has been one of our more popular daylilies the last couple of years.

'Rosy Returns' will undoubtedly become a very popular variety. It is a rosy red version of the reblooming 'Happy Returns'. It may not rebloom quite as much as 'Happy Returns', but if it starts in June, and blooms a couple more times during the summer, who can complain about that? 'Janice Brown' is another gorgeous pink with a rose eye.

Perennials: A couple of new, low growing **Sedums** look interesting. 'Angelina' has brilliant yellow foliage with yellow flowers on 6-8" stems. It should be quite striking when planted near dark foliated plants. **Sedum** 'Voodoo' is the darkest of the low growing varieties, with deep mahogany red foliage and red flowers. Both of these new varieties are extremely hardy, rated as Zone 3 plants.

People are slowly discovering what wonderful little plants the **Tiarellas** are. The common name for **Tiarella** is Foamflower, and it is a low growing shade plant with white or pink bottle-

brush flowers only about seven inches tall. The foliage of the newer varieties has black veining or patterns in the middle of the deeply lobed leaves, and in the fall the foliage turns a gorgeous medley of colors. The **Tiarellas** tend to spread, but very slowly, not invasively. Use them along the walkway, where you can see them, as they are quite short. Two new varieties include 'Jeepers Creepers', which has a dramatic black pattern on the veins, and 'Pink Brushes', which had shiny foliage with black veining, along with pink flowers.

Other perennials to watch for include **Rudbeckia** 'Prairie Sun', which has striking 5-inch golden yellow flowers; **Tricyrtis** 'Gilt Edge', a Japanese Toad Lily with yellow variegation on the foliage and purple spotted flowers in the fall; and **Nepeta** 'Sweet Dream', a pink flowered Catmint.

Grasses: A couple of new variegated grasses look like they will be real winners. **Calamagrostis** 'Avalanche' is a striking variegated form of 'Karl Foerster', the Perennial of the Year for 2002. 'Avalanche' has a wide white stripe down the center of each leaf blade. **Miscanthus** 'Little Zebra' is a dwarf version of Zebra Grass. It grows 3-4' tall, with the horizontal yellow banding of regular Zebra Grass.

Trees and Shrubs: **Betula** 'Whitespire' is a Japanese White Birch, which is similar to the River Birch, but has whitish bark. It is resistant to the birch borer. We'll have this tree both in single tree form and clump form.

We continue to look for fastigate (slender) tree forms. So many people want another tree in their yard, but don't have room for one that spreads 40' wide. Acer 'Bowhall' is a red maple with good fall color, and which grows 40' tall, but only 15' wide.

A good, controlled growth conifer is **Picea abies** 'Sherwood Compact', an intermediate sized Norway Spruce. It has short, dark green needles, and will grow to perhaps 20-25', rather than the 40-60' of a regular Norway Spruce.

For those of you looking for some unusual, hard-to-find trees, we will have a few of the following: **Laburnum** 'Vossii' (Goldenchain Tree), **Oxydendrum arboreum** (Sourwood), **Prunus** x 'Snow Fountains' (a weeping cherry ground cover), and **Heptacodium miconioides** (Seven Son Flower).

New shrubs include **Berberis** 'Bagatelle', a dark maroon Barberry that is even smaller than 'Crimson Pygmy'; **Hydrangea** 'Limelight', a unique variety with lime green flowers; and **Indigofera** (Indigo), a pretty, colonizing shrub forming swaths of green foliage with rose colored flowers in summer.

An exciting new Shrub Rose is 'Knockout', a variety that is completely resistant to blackspot. It forms a rounded bush, 3' tall, with cherry red blossoms from June until frost. We will also have 'Lexington', a dwarf, disease-resistant variety, only 2' tall, with soft yellow semi-double flowers.

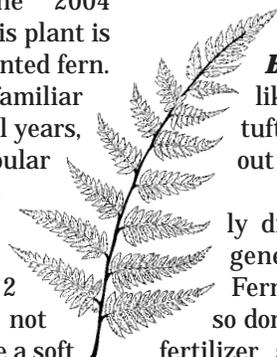
Fern Is Perennial Of The Year

The Perennial Plant Association has named **Athyrium niponicum** 'Pictum' (a.k.a. 'Metallicum') as the 2004 Perennial Plant of the Year. This plant is better known as a Japanese painted fern. Many of you are already quite familiar with this fine plant. For several years, it has been one of the most popular shade perennials that we carry.

The Japanese painted fern likes partial to full shade and some moisture. It grows 12 to 18 inches tall, and does not become invasive. The fronds are a soft shade of metallic silver-gray with

hints of red and blue. This fern makes a wonderful companion to just about any shade perennial, including hostas, astilbes, **Carex**, **Brunnera**, and **Dicentra**. We like to use it to provide soft tufts of silvery texture throughout the shade garden.

These ferns can be easily divided in the spring or fall, generally into 3 or 4 pieces. Ferns don't need a lot of fertilizer, so don't overdue it. A good organic fertilizer such as Pro-Gro, by North Country Organics, works well.



Tree Peonies Worth A Try

Most gardeners have not tried Tree Peonies for a couple of reasons. First, they have not been available at most garden centers. Second, they have been very expensive. Propagators have been producing more the last few years, so that availability is now better and prices are down around \$25.00 each.

The Tree Peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) is not a tree, but a perennial shrub. The branches do not die back to the ground in the winter, as do the herbaceous peonies. Afternoon shade helps preserve the delicate, but exotic flowers, which bloom two or three weeks prior to herbaceous peonies. An eastern exposure often works well, so that the plants receive good sunshine in the morning, but get shade in the afternoon, as well as protection from drying winds.

Tree Peonies are hardy to Zone 4, and grow 4-5' tall. Flowers are large and showy, and come in a wide range of colors. The Tree Peony was discovered in southern China 1600 years ago. The Chinese developed many varieties, but most of the varieties that we carry here were hybridized by the Japanese, imported and then propagated in the United States. They retain their Japanese names.

We will have eight different varieties this year, including 'Hoki', a scarlet red semi-double; 'Kinshi', a golden yellow semi-double; 'Yagumo', a purplish-red semi-double; and 'Shimanishiki', a rare two-tone with large red and white double flowers. Although the labels state that it may take a year or two to start flowering, most of the plants that we had last year flowered right in the pot (and sold as quickly as they flowered). Our supply is better this year.

Here is a plant that will call for some gardening patience, since it will take a few years to put some size on it. But it will grow into a real focal point that will get more spectacular each year.

Free Workshops

We will hold the following free workshops this year. Bring along a lawn chair and dress for the weather. No advance registration is required for any of the workshops.

Spring Bed Preparation: Jane Morris, our Head Gardener, will give a workshop on spring bed preparation and rejuvenation on Saturday, April 17, at 10:00 a.m. She will demonstrate and discuss what she does in our gardens each spring. Topics will include clean-up, cutting back, what needs divided, fertilization, and mulching. Jane has her degree in Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design from Illinois State University, and has been with us for five years. Jane will be assisted by Mary Scanland, a knowledgeable and longtime employee, an avid gardener, and a Master Gardener. Together, they will be able to answer lots of your gardening questions.

Dividing Perennials: We will hold our annual workshop on dividing perennials on Saturday, April 24, at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss and demonstrate when and how to dig, divide, and replant various perennials, including hostas,

daylilies, and grasses.

Trees and Shrubs: Selecting trees and shrubs for your landscape can be a whole lot more fun and more creative than planting a maple tree in the front yard and putting some yews around the house. We'll have a short course on trees and shrubs on Saturday, May 1, at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss the characteristics of a wide range of woody ornamentals in an effort to widen your knowledge base and expand your palette.

Aquatic Plants: On Saturday, May 15, at 10:00 a.m., we will hold a workshop to discuss aquatic plants, including water lilies, oxygenators, and marginal plants, both hardy and tropical. Plants are important for both the aesthetics and the health of the pond. We will discuss planting techniques, fertilization requirements, winter care, and general maintenance.

Grasses: We will hold a workshop on ornamental grasses in September. The exact day and time will be announced in a later newsletter and on our website.

Sign Up To Stay On Our Mailing List

Our mailing list gets way out of control because so far, what we have done is put you on the list and leave you there. After a few years, the list grows quite large, and it starts to contain too high a percentage of incorrect information due to deaths, moving, divorces, etc. Much of the mail is wasted, and the job of getting out a newsletter gets more overwhelming.

In order to keep the mailing list at a more manageable level, we are asking you to sign up on a yearly basis. We hope to do this as cheaply and easily as possible (for you and for us) by asking you to sign up in one of the three following ways:

1. Go to our website, www.hornbakergardens.com, and click on the words "Mailing List", and follow the direc-

tions to check that your data is correct, and submit it. You will need your customer number, which is printed right above your name on the mailing label affixed to this newsletter; or

2. When you are here, go to the main retail checkout room, and find the computer "kiosk", where you can check that your data is correct, and submit it; or
3. Fill out the form below, cut it out, and mail it to us.

We thank you for your patience and understanding regarding this requirement that you sign up again each year. But to leave the mailing list in its present uncontrolled state would be wasteful in so many ways that we just have to take these steps.

Please keep me (us) on your mailing list.
PLEASE PRINT

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How Far To Trim Back?

Most perennials die back all the way to the ground each year, so spring maintenance consists of simply removing the old foliage before the plants start growing. However, there are a few plants that you want don't want to cut all the way back.

Perovskia (Russian Sage) is a woody grower that will sprout from last year's wood. Leave 10-12" of old growth when you trim it back in the spring. Once it sprouts, you can trim some more off of it if there is nothing sprouting from the tips.

Another woody grower is **Buddleia** (Butterfly Bush). The book on this plant says not to cut it off in the fall. Wait until spring. We usually don't cut ours back until April, at which time we generally leave 8 inches or so of the old wood. Sometimes, if there has been a good snow cover during the coldest weather, new sprouts will come from the old wood. More often, all new growth comes from the ground, at which point we go ahead and cut off as much of the old wood as we can.

Lavandula (Lavender) can look pretty ratty in spring, but don't cut it to the ground. Trim it back to make it more compact and shapely, but new growth should then come from the old.

When we cut back our ornamental grasses in spring (April), we generally leave 6 inches of stubble. New shoots may come directly out of the old stubble, and there is always new growth that comes from around the outside edges, and which will cover up the stubble that is left.

Bronzes, Bells & Rusty Critters

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grasping the leather thongs, and striking the rubber clapper against the side of the bell. The result is a rich, deep, long-lasting tone that is very pleasant.

Naturally, we got in touch with the man who makes these wonderful bells, and bought a few. They are an excellent addition to the large chimes that we carry.

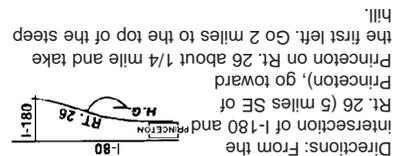
Rusty Critters: For the last several

years, we have carried the metal artwork of Dick Southwick, an Illinois artist/welder. He did the dragonflies, mosquitoes, fish, birds, praying mantises, and sunflowers that you have seen here. Dick tries to use recognizable farm parts in his work. Each year he comes up with new artwork, and it will be fun to see what he shows up with this spring.

This year, we also have metal artwork

from Robert Cumpston, another Illinois artist/welder. Bob does mostly animals, and we have a wide array of rusty critters that he has created, including an armadillo, fox, pheasant, owl, turtle, and just about every barnyard animal you can think of.

Two of Bob's larger and more interesting pieces are the llama, shown here, and a giraffe that stands six feet tall.



GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE



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