



Notes from

# HORNBAKER GARDENS

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

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www.hornbakergardens.com

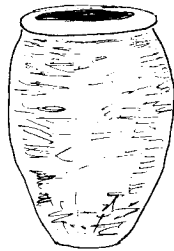
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## Pots Aplenty: unique, rustic line

We really got carried away this time! For years, we have wanted to carry a line of pottery for garden and home. We have checked out lines of pottery at the trade shows and with various suppliers that sell primarily to garden centers. Some of it was nice, but not different or unique enough to bother with.

From some good friends that we made through the American Hosta Society, we learned of a source of outstanding pottery that comes from a particular kiln in Asia. This kiln is known as a dragon or snake kiln. It is around 200 feet long, and is built on the slope of a hill. Once the kiln is loaded with hand made pots of all sizes and shapes, a fire is built in the lowest end of the kiln, and the heat sweeps up through the length of the kiln. The result is a unique, rustic line of pottery that we really fell in love with.

Due to the relatively primitive way that these pots are produced, no two are quite the same. We visited the importer's warehouse yard, and were very impressed with her taste. We hardly saw anything that we didn't want to buy, and we bought way more than we had anticipated that we might want to buy. The great thing, given the uniqueness of these pieces, was that we were able to



walk around and label the exact pots that we wanted.

This line of pottery is freeze proof, meaning that the pots should be all right outside over the winter, provided that drainage holes allow water to drain out.

Some come with drainage holes already, but many do not, since some people will want to make fountains, or otherwise hold moisture inside the pot. A masonry bit can be used to add drainage holes.

Some of the pots are quite large, and will make an artistic statement in the garden all by themselves. Others can be used as planters, troughs, or fountains. Some will make great holders for grass bouquets.

We bought so much that we will probably have to turn the machine shed right across the road from our retail room into a "pottery shop". It's difficult to say how fast that might happen. There is a lot of stuff in there that will have to be relocated. In the meantime, you will see pots all over the place.

## Open House And Hosta Walk

We will hold our eighteenth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 9, 10 and 11, 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, 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.

## Perennial Plant Of The Year

The entire family of Helleborus hybrids has been named as the 2005 Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association. Helleborus is better known as Lenten Rose, and is named as such because it blooms in very early spring.

The dark evergreen, leathery foliage stands about 15"-18" tall and 15" wide. The nodding flowers are up to 3" wide, and vary in color from purple to pink to cream. Lenten Rose does best in partial

to full shade and humus-enriched soil, moist but well drained. Although the foliage stays green all winter, it may become scorched in our northern climate unless it is covered by snow. If this occurs, cut out the old leaves and new ones will quickly fill in.

Plant Helleborus along a shady path or walkway where you can enjoy the early flowers. The early season flowers and evergreen foliage are sufficient reason to utilize this plant.

### RETAIL HOURS

April 11 will be opening day for us (since the 10th falls on a Sunday), and we will be open through our usual last day of 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 5.

# What's New?

We have posted a complete list of all of our new plants on our website, [www.hornbakergardens.com](http://www.hornbakergardens.com). Just click on the words "New Plants" on the right side of the home page. Here are some of the new plants about which we are excited:

**Herbs:** This will be a brand new line of plants for us. Many customers and several of our employees have been wanting us to carry herbs for several years. There are several varieties of perennials that we already carry which are considered as herbs. By early May, we will have 57 new varieties of culinary herbs, mints, and ornamental perennial and annual herbs. One of our retail ladies, Charon Freeberg, is especially knowledgeable and enthusiastic about herbs. Ask for her if you need some herbal advice.

**Hostas:** 'El Nino' is a new sport of 'Halcyon', with the same terrific chalky blue color, but with a pure white margin. Another good hosta with that same color theme is 'Tom Schmid', a striking sport of 'Krossa Regal'. Like 'Krossa Regal', it is a large clump of upright foliage of soft blue-gray, but with attention grabbing, clean white margins.

'Hoosier Dome' is a large plant with huge, shiny green leaves that arch downward in a dome shape. Each domed leaf is beautifully ruffled on the margins. A mature clump of 'Hoosier Dome' is going to be an outstanding specimen with its unique shape and impressive size.

White centered hostas always catch everyone's eye. 'Dancing in the Rain' is a lively sport of 'Blue Umbrellas', displaying white centers with blue-green streaks and margins. 'Eskimo Pie' is a sport of 'Northern Exposure'. It emerges with light yellow centers, gradually turning creamy white. The light centers are surrounded with a narrow layer of green and then by a wider blue margin. For a smaller white centered hosta, take a look at 'Lakeside Cup Cake', which forms an outstanding small clump of glowing white foliage with deep blue-green borders.

**Irises:** Those of us who are anxious for the irises to begin blooming start watching for the standard dwarf bearded (SDB) varieties. These little cuties start blooming a full two weeks earlier than the tall bearded irises, typically in very

early May, but some in late April. We have always carried several varieties of SDBs, but here are three new ones to take a look at: 'Fireplace Embers', with dark yellow standards and dark maroon falls; 'Smart', a red-violet with a dark purple spot on the falls; and 'What Again', a rebloomer with wisteria blue standards and straw yellow falls.

We continue to upgrade our tall bearded selection with eighteen new varieties this year, including 'Jennifer Rebecca', a ruffled, light rose-pink self that will rebloom in late summer, and 'Savannah Sunset', a long-blooming, glowing orange self with tangerine beards.

**Daylilies:** We are offering more new varieties this year than we have since we first got into daylilies—48 new varieties. It is very hard for us to resist some of the newer pink varieties. 'Strawberry Fields Forever' is a clear pink with a strawberry-rose edge and eye zone. 'Sue Rothbauer' is a bright and cheery rose-pink self with a yellow watermark and cream midribs, nicely ruffled.

An addition to the "Candy" series from Stamile is 'Custard Candy', a creamy yellow self with a maroon band, yellow watermark, and gold picotee edging. 'Bright Sunset' is a tropical, burnt orange self with a golden orange band, promi-

nent gold midribs and tightly ruffled borders. We have a new red spider daylily named, appropriately enough, 'Ruby Spider'. We are also looking forward to seeing 'Purple de Oro', a reblooming, purple sister to the popular 'Stella de Oro'.

We picked up several new daylilies from hybridizer Bob Ellison, of Rockford, Illinois. Bob has done a lot of work with ruffling, so you will want to walk the field this July and check out some of these very unusual varieties. We will have enough of some of his new ones to sell a few, but some others we may have to hold for increase for a year or two.

**Perennials:** There has been a flurry of hybridizing activity going on in the world of *Echinacea*, better known as Purple Coneflowers. We have several new varieties this year (and several more already ordered for next year). Coneflowers are no longer just purple. 'Mango Meadowbrite' and 'Sunset' are both orange, and 'Sunrise' is yellow. But there are also some new purple varieties: 'Doubledecker' has a set of short petals emerging from the top of the cone; 'Little Giant' is very short, but has large flowers; 'Vintage Wine' is a deep raspberry wine color; and 'Sparkler' has unusual, white splashed foliage.

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## Landscape Architect Available

Last fall it was our pleasure to meet Jeff Bergfeld, a landscape architect who has recently moved back to this area to start Bergfeld Landscape Architecture Studio, a design-only landscape architecture firm. After graduating from the University of Illinois with a degree in Landscape Architecture, and practicing for over ten years in Sausalito, CA, and the past five in Chicago/Evanston and the North Shore, Jeff and his wife, Joan, decided to move their family closer where they grew up, which is Henry, IL.

Jeff's interest is in designing landscapes. He has no plans to develop an installation part of the landscape business. Jeff showed us pictures and drawings of several of the landscape projects he has designed, and we were very impressed. He really knows his plant material, and has a great creative flair.

We get so many requests to design

landscapes and gardens for customers, but we have neither the time nor the inclination to do much of that. Jeff would be a perfect match for those of you who plan to plant and maintain your landscape yourself but need an overall landscape master plan for your yard or a little something specially designed. He can also help those of you who want to have the landscape installed by a landscaper, through the many connections he is busy making throughout the area. We have already referred a couple of customers to Jeff, and they report back that they are very pleased with his work.

To contact Jeff, phone 815-303-3996. He is willing to travel up to two hours from Princeton to take a look at your site. We are fortunate to have someone of this caliber available to do design work in this area.

# Ozzie The Pup Moves In

When Rif was a younger dog, he used to keep the deer and other wild critters out on the perimeter of our property. As he has aged, the wildlife seems to have set up camp on our very doorstep. The deer consider the display gardens in the front yard as prime foraging area, and raccoons and possums come up on the front porch every night to finish off any leftover cat and dog food. Rif is asleep, too old and tired to care, or he has decided he likes the company.

We went in search of a puppy around the first of March, and found just what we were looking for right away. Through the office of our local vet, Mark Maxwell, we found a litter of pups that were a cross between a yellow Lab and a Golden Retriever. We wanted a dog with short hair, and chose the one that appeared to be all Lab.

It was around March 1, and still a little cool out, so we thought that we should keep him inside for a couple of weeks until it warmed up some, even though the pup appeared to be about four months old and was already starting to put some size on him. Bad idea.

We had not named him yet. Names such as Waterboy and Squirt seemed appropriate because of what he seemed to be doing every ten minutes. He spent the first night in the laundry room. After seeing the mess he made in there the next morning, we had some other choice names for him, none of which I should put in print. We also decided that he was ready to be an outdoor doggy. He's wearing a fur coat, after all. We fixed him up with a box full of loose straw, and he's been fine outside ever since.

David came home from the University of Illinois for a night just to see the pup, whom he named Ozzie. Now that we know how to get David home for a visit, this place is apt to turn into a zoo.

Ozzie is bound to be a big hit with our customers, especially with children. He'll be a goofy puppy for a while, and we don't dare leave a shoe or glove around where he can get it and chew it to shreds. But for a pup, he seems incredibly mellow, and he wants to be everybody's friend. Let's hope that the deer don't figure that out.

The cats are not overly thrilled that there is a new king of the front porch.



Ozzie

Frankie, the black cat with attitude, wasted no time letting Ozzie know that

he was not a cat to be messed with. Rather than run from Ozzie, as the other cats did, Frankie whacked him on the nose and held his ground. Ozzie learned quickly to keep a respectful distance.

We thought that Rif might feel rejuvenated with a younger playmate around, and perhaps he will when the weather warms up. So far, it is more a matter of Rif tolerating Ozzie, rather than appreciating him.

Our biggest fear is that Ozzie might get hit by a car before he figures out that he has to stay out of the way of traffic. So we thank you for being extra careful this spring as you come and go.

## What's New

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There is a new series of *Buddleia*, or Butterfly Bush, known as the English Butterfly Series. These plants are shorter and more compact, growing 3-4' tall. We will have three in this series: 'Adonis Blue', a dark royal blue; 'Peacock', a lavender pink; and 'Purple Emperor', a dark purple variety. Gardeners should be able to utilize these new Butterfly Bushes in places where the older 6-foot varieties are just too large.

A couple of other smaller sized plants are out this year. *Eupatorium purpureum*, or Joe Pye Weed, puts on a great show with its flat-topped, dark pink flowers in late summer and early fall. But, since it grows 4-6' tall, many gardeners don't have enough room to devote to the plant. *Eupatorium* 'Little Joe' is the same plant in a 3-4' size. It grows in sun to part shade, and is rock hardy to Zone 3.

The other smaller plant is a new *Ligularia* called 'Little Rocket'. This is a dwarf version of 'The Rocket'. 'Little Rocket' stands only 20" tall, with large, conical, bright yellow flowers. It likes moisture and some afternoon shade.

**Trees and Shrubs:** Each year, we try out some new trees. In many cases, we'll buy just two of a new variety—one to plant for ourselves, and one to sell. Gradually, we are establishing a pretty fair arboretum. New trees in very short supply include *Aesculus* 'Briotti' (Red Horsechestnut), *Liriodendron* 'Aureomarginatum' and 'Mediopicum' (Variegated Tulip Trees), *Carpinus* bet. 'Pendula' (Weeping European

Hornbeam), and *Xanthoceras sorbifolium* (Yellowhorn). If any of these are of interest to you, show up early to take a look at them. Most of our trees will be arriving the week of April 11. Check our website for descriptions, sizes and prices, or give us a call.

New shrubs include some new *Hydrangeas*, including 'Endless Summer', the highly touted long bloomer with mophead flowers of pink, or blue in acidic soil. 'Pee Wee' is an excellent dwarf form of Oakleaf Hydrangea, growing only 3-4' tall. We are anxious to see 'Lemon Wave', a wild psychedelic, variable blend of yellow, cream, white and green foliage, rivaling the best of the variegated hosta. Flowers are rare, but who cares!

We will have two from the Satin Series of *Hibiscus* (Rose of Sharon), 'Rose Satin' and 'Blue Satin'. These are new hybrids from Europe that are drawing a lot of attention, with large, single, satiny flowers. They grow 8-12' tall, with a spread of 6-8', in sun or part shade.

Shrub roses seem to be gaining in popularity, especially with the press given to 'Knockout' and 'Pink Knockout', a couple of relatively new, disease resistant varieties. Besides those two, we have chosen some other disease resistant varieties: 'Frau Dagmar Hartopp', a silvery pink; 'Grandma's Blessing', a double dusty pink; 'My Hero', a double red; and 'Tahitian Moon', a double yellow that will climb somewhat.



## Variegated Willow Makes Nice Show

A plant the we have really liked since we first started carrying it a couple of years ago is *Salix integra* 'Hakuro Nishiki', a shrub with pink stems and small, variegated leaves of green, pink and white. Some of the leaves are all white. The shrub grows 4-6' tall and wide, and is hardy to Zone 4. It can probably handle full sun if given enough moisture, but is probably best off in some dappled shade, especially in the afternoon.

Typical of the willow family, it is a fast grower. If left unpruned, it develops long, slender, whip-like stems that are graceful and arching. If pruned, it will develop more branches and be a fuller plant, which would make it more useful as a screen. Since the leaves are small, the variegation is not loud, but rather soft and subtle. The light color makes a very nice, contrasting addition to the landscape.

## Spring Flowering Bulb Show

Last fall, we planted over 1200 bulbs of tulips, daffodils, and other spring flowering bulbs, most in the new display beds adjacent to the parking lot. Assuming that Ozzie can keep the deer from munching them, we should have quite a show of bloom, starting in March with crocuses, and continuing through April and May, and even into June, with some of the late tulips.

The plan is to have you place orders for some of these bulbs while you can see them in bloom. The bulb company that we use is starting a program of bulbs

packaged in somewhat larger numbers, but at a more reasonable price, to encourage customers to use the greater number of bulbs needed to make a real splash of color. You can pick up your bulbs in the fall, or we can ship them to you.

## 'Striptease' Is Hosta Of The Year

The American Hosta Growers Association has named 'Striptease' as the Hosta of the Year for 2005. 'Striptease' has been one of the more popular hostas at our nursery for several years. It forms a medium sized clump and is a fast grower.

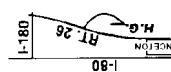
The foliage of 'Striptease' has chartreuse centers with wide, rich green margins. Between the center and the margins are unique, narrow strips of white, which give the plant its provocative name. Lavender flowers top the plant in late July or early August.

The subtle variegation of 'Striptease' makes for a very classy hosta. Give this one a place of honor in your shade garden.

***Last year we indicated that you would have to sign up on a yearly basis in order to stay on the mailing list. That has proven to be too cumbersome for both you and us. For now, in place of one of our four yearly newsletters (probably the one in late June), we plan to send out a post card. Post cards that are returned for lack of a forwarding address, or for some other reason, will let us know which names we should remove from the mailing list. Otherwise, you will remain on the mailing list without having to do anything***

*Birdbath hint: To keep your birdbath cleaner, put a water hyacinth in it. It will provide attractive foliage and blue flowers as well.*

Directions: From the intersection of I-180 and Princeton, go toward Rt. 26 (5 miles SE of Princeton), go toward Princeton on Rt. 26 about 1/4 mile and take the first left. Go 2 miles to the top of the steep hill.



**GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE**



We accept

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