

New Shop To Feature Vintage Gardening

Last fall, after we closed for the season, we tore down the old brown machine shed that stood right across from the checkout, and put up a new Morton building. The old building was rotting out on the corners, and the tall sliding doors invited birds into the building—it just was never going to be a customer-friendly shop.

The new building sits on the same concrete slab as the old one, and is divided into a storage/shipping room and a retail shop. More of a “gardeners’ shop” than a “gift shop”, our shop will contain items to put or use in your gardens, yards, porches and patios.

We have teamed up with Steve Esme of Princeton. Many of you may remember the store called The Paper Horse,



New shop located at Hornbakergardens.

which he used to operate at Princeton’s north end several years ago. Steve specializes in what he likes to call “vintage gardening,” and many of the items

New Shop

(continued on page 3)

Wedding Bells At The Gardens

We are happy to announce that there will be two weddings at Hornbakergardens this year. Our daughter Molly will be marrying Russell Blogg on June 28, late in the day. (Please note that we will be closing at 4:00 p.m. that day.) Molly and Russ met at Illinois Wesleyan University, where they were both on the swim team. For the last

two years, Russ has been working on his master’s in biology at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, GA. He spent the first year of that project studying elephant behavior and ecology at Addo Elephant National Park in South Africa. Molly joined Russ for his last three months in Africa, and called home soon after she left to announce their engagement. Molly and Russ will be living in Princeton, where Molly is continuing her work here at the gardens.

Our daughter Sara will be marrying Michael Tracey on October 11, shortly after we close for the season. Sara and Mike both graduated from Princeton High School. After college, Sara moved to the Boston area for five

Wedding Bells

(continued on page 3)

Open House June 12, 13, And 14

Our twenty-first annual Open House and Hosta Walk will be held on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 12, 13 and 14. 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 but most, including the spectacular *Miscanthus* varieties, plume out in September and early October.

RETAIL HOURS

From April 10 through October 10, we are open Monday through Saturday, 8:00 to 5:00. We are closed on Sundays, as well as on July 4, and Labor Day, September 1. Please note that we will be closing at 4:00 on Saturday, June 28, for Molly’s wedding..

Wilson Ware Group, Landscape Architecture

We were recently introduced to John Ware of LaGrange Park, Illinois. John has started his own firm, known as Wilson WARE Group, Landscape Architecture. Three years ago, we

Molly's Back!

Our daughter Molly has been with us here at the Gardens every summer since we started, until last year. She went to be with her honey, Russ, while he worked on his master's degree at Georgia Southern University. Molly and Russ, as previously mentioned, are getting married this summer. They plan to live in the Princeton area so that Molly can work with us in the business.

Molly has always been interested in the nursery. Years ago, when my parents, Ray and Nancy Hornbaker, used to come up from Florida to help us during iris season, Molly was their #1 helper. Dad still likes to tell the story about a customer who came in and asked a few questions about irises. Mom and Dad were both busy, so 12-year-old Molly answered the gentleman's questions. Not so sure that he should be taking gardening advice from one so young, the customer wait-

mentioned landscape architect Jeff Bergfeld of Henry, Illinois, in our spring newsletter. Jeff has done work for many of our customers, but finds that the drive from Henry to the Chicago



Molly Hornbaker

ed around so that he could ask Dad the same questions. Dad gave him the same answers that Molly had. Molly was hurt that her words weren't given the same weight as Dad's words by the customer, but she felt better when she

heard her grandparents brag to us about how their #1 helper was able to answer the customer's questions.

Molly likes the plant business, as we do, because there is always more to learn. We are very happy to have her here with us. She takes a big burden off of our shoulders. So welcome her back this spring, and congratulate her on her upcoming wedding. But please don't start talking weddings with her. Let's keep her mind on plants as much as possible.

suburban area is quite time consuming. So Jeff suggested that perhaps some of our suburban customers should be apprised of his friend John Ware.

We met with John over the winter and talked plants and design for some time. He showed us a portfolio of some of his work, and we were duly impressed. John especially enjoys residential design. For those of you who want something special in the way of a landscape design in the LaGrange Park area, we recommend John Ware. He can be reached at 708 579-3562 or jware@wwaregroup.com.

Geranium 'Rozanne' Is Perennial Plant Of The Year

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title of 2008 Perennial Plant of the year to *Geranium* 'Rozanne'. This strong performing hardy geranium was discovered in a garden in Somerset, England in 1989. It has 2 1/2" iridescent violet-blue, saucer-shaped flowers with purple-violet veins and radiant white centers. The plant blooms from late spring to mid fall, making it one of the longest bloomers of any of the hardy geraniums.

'Rozanne' forms a dome shaped plant around 20" tall and 24" to 28" wide. It grows in full sun to part shade. Some afternoon shade is probably best here in Illinois. It is a good companion plant to Shasta daisies, perennial salvia, veronica, hostas, and short ornamental grasses. Rozanne's energetic habit makes it a worthy tenant of patio containers, window boxes and hanging baskets.

We have long thought that the hardy geraniums are an underappreciated and underused group of plants. There are several good varieties that make good specimen plants in sun or a fair amount of shade. They can also be massed as a ground cover. Geraniums may not be the eye-catching stars of the garden, but they have their place in nearly every perennial garden.

Things We've Learned

Catching Moles: The Mole Eliminator that we mentioned in last spring's newsletter really does work. But moles are harder to catch in the spring. They don't seem to be reusing the same runs, and you can't catch them if they don't come back through the run in which you have set the trap. From mid-summer on, they must be thinking about settling down in one area for the winter, and they are much easier to catch because they come back through the same runs. We caught a few last spring, but we caught them hand over fist last fall. We sell the Mole Eliminator here for \$34.99. It's a sturdy, easy-to-use, sure-fire trap that will last for years.

Protecting Pottery: The pottery that we sell is freeze-proof. That is, freezing alone will not cause the pot to break. However, if the pot is full, or even partially full of moist dirt or water,

the freezing of those contents may cause them to expand enough to break the pot. For that reason, we recommend that you not leave your pot full of dirt for the winter. The easy way to have plants growing in the pot for the summer is to pot your plants into a plastic pot that fits into the pottery. An upside-down plastic pot inside the pottery can be used to raise the planted pot to the desired height, and then the planted pot can easily be removed for the winter. But even an empty pot can have its bottom blown out in a winter like the one we just had. Leaves in the bottom of the pot can cause poor drainage, or a combination of snow, then rain, then a freeze, can cause water to freeze in the bottom and crack the pot. So the best advice is to either put your empty pots under cover for the winter, or else turn them upside down.

What's New

We have a more complete list of our new plants for 2008 on our website. Click on "New Plants". But here are some of the new ones that we are looking forward to:

Hostas: It's been said that the one who dies with the most hostas wins. We aren't trying for that. After all, we discontinue about as many varieties as we take on each year. But it may explain our long addiction to new hostas. At last count, we have 37 new varieties of hostas this year, and I know I've order in some more since our list was published. A show stopper that we got in late last year is 'Lakeside Love Affair'. Its beautiful, tricolor leaves are white with wide, dark green margins and lime green midribs, forming a flaring, upright mound.

'Barbara Ann' is a stunning sport of *sieboldiana* 'Elegans' from Great Britain, with blue-green foliage and creamy white margins. 'Dragon Tails' is a fast growing dwarf clump of narrow, upright, yellow foliage with wonderful, wavy margins. 'Heat Wave' is an improved sport of 'Bright Lights', featuring gold foliage with wide, blue margins and thick, puckered texture. 'Ivory Coast' is a smaller sport of 'Sagae' with broader, rippled leaf margins. Though smaller than 'Sagae', it is still a large clump of gray-green leaves with yellow margins, turning creamy in summer.

Two other large hostas are 'Miss Tokyo', the largest and most majestic of all of Hideko Gowen's introductions, featuring large, dark green leaves with wide, creamy margins; and 'Queen of the Seas', a large clump of big, blue, pointed leaves with piecrust margins from the late, great hybridizer, Mildred Seaver.

Daylilies: New daylilies include 'Garden Symphony' (Reckamp/Klehm). Brother Charles called this his symphony of pleasant garden colors—a pastel blend with soft peach and pink overtones, a nice green throat and the flower form that he preferred, one that faces the viewer. 'Golden Tycoon' (Klehm) is a shockingly bright golden orange self with tightly ruffled petals. It's a late bloomer with large flowers.

Grasses: *Miscanthus* 'Super Stripe' is a Porcupine Grass that is touted as

being showier than 'Strictus', with its horizontal bands of gold more tightly spaced. The tawny plumes stand up to 7' tall in early fall. *Panicum* 'Thundercloud' is a very large variety with strongly upright foliage that remains standing through the winter. Foliage is bluish-green during the growing season, and the pinkish plumes go 7'-8' tall.

Pennisetum 'Piglet' is the perfect size of fountain grass. At 18", it is taller than 'Little Bunny' and shorter than 'Hameln'. A couple of selections of prairie grasses sound interesting. *Schizachyrium* 'Prairie Blues' is a Little Blue Stem with improved, brighter gray-blue foliage and red-orange fall color, standing 3' tall. *Sorghastrum* 'Sioux Blue' is a blue form of Indian Grass with yellow fall color, growing up to 6' tall.

Perennials: We have around 80 new varieties of perennials, not counting hostas, daylilies or grasses. As usual, there are several new *Heucheras*, including 'Blackout', a nearly jet-black color; 'Citronelle', with bright lemon yellow foliage and good heat and sun tolerance; and 'Midnight Rose', with dark purple foliage variegated with bright fuchsia pink spots and flecks.

Lamium 'Ghost' is a good ground cover for shady areas. At 10-14", it stands a little taller than some other varieties of *Lamium*. The all silver leaves are topped with clusters of large, bright orchid purple flowers in spring, making for an eye-catching contrast. Also good in the shade is *Ligularia* 'Osiris Fanaisie', a dwarf form standing around 24" tall. It has the same dark green foliage with burgundy undersides and bright gold flowers of the larger varieties, but this new compact form will fit into more gardens.

Veronica 'Foxy Lady' is the first bicolor veronica. Its dwarf habit features bright fuchsia pink and white candy-striped flowers over a long bloom period. Two new Shasta Daisies feature yellow in the flowers. *Leucanthemum* 'Gold Rush' is a fun two-toned, large-flowered daisy with fringed white outer petals and frilly yellow inner petals. It has short, 14-inch stems that do not require staking. *Leucanthemum*

'Sonnenschein' has pale lemon-yellow daisies with large golden-yellow centers. The large blossoms stand 36" tall.

Trees and shrubs: Two new Hydrangeas have some great pink color. Both are *paniculata* types, which tend to be very hardy. 'Pinky Winky' has large, two-toned flower heads that start white and turn pink, but continue to push new white flowers from the top of the blossoms. 'Quick Fire' blooms very early, in late May or early June, with blooms that turn to bright pink. Speaking of Hydrangeas, there is also a great new Hydrangea vine called 'Mirranda', with gold-margined foliage.

Two new Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) trees are of note. 'Peve Minaret' is a miniature, standing only 8' tall, with soft, rich green foliage that begs to be touched. 'Cascade Falls' is a weeping form from New Zealand. It grows to 10' and cascades in sprays of soft green foliage.

Betula nigra 'Little King' is a dwarf selection of river birch with cinnamon and cream exfoliating bark—perfect for smaller gardens or areas where you don't have room for a full sized birch.

New Shop

(continued from page 1)

in the new shop will be from him. He goes to auctions throughout the year, picking up interesting and unique older items that qualify for his idea of "vintage". Steve has a flair for decorating and an eye for the interesting. We all will be sure to get some great ideas from him.

Wedding

(continued from page 1)

years, but we are delighted that she has returned to Illinois. Sara and Mike live in Bloomington, where Mike works as a financial planner and Sara is continuing her career as a kindergarten teacher.

We are very happy to be having both weddings here at the Gardens, but are even happier to be welcoming both of these fine young men into our family.

Sorry, this does not mean that we will be opening up the Gardens to wedding events. We will have our hands full just surviving these two!

Newsletters Via Email

With the rising cost of postage, a constantly growing customer list, and the ease of sending information via email, it is only logical that we go to a newsletter sent by email rather than by traditional mail. Our plan is to continue sending out our usual four newsletters this year by regular mail (as well as by email for those who have already signed up), but go to email delivery starting next year.

To sign up, please go to our website,

www.hornbakergardens.com, and sign up to be on the newsletter list. Click on the link right on our homepage, or go to the newsletter tab. We will not sell or otherwise share our newsletter list with anyone else.

We will continue to send out newsletters by regular mail for those who want it. We ask that you drop us a note in the mail or fill out a request for paper newsletters when you are here

Blue Mouse Ears Is Hosta Of The Year

The American Hosta Growers Association has named 'Blue Mouse Ears' as the Hosta of the Year for 2008. This is the smallest hosta to ever receive this award. It is generally categorized as a dwarf (or a mini), growing only 6 or 7 inches tall and around 12 inches in diameter. Its small, round, heart shaped leaves have extremely thick substance, making it resistant to

slugs, and therefore one of the most rugged dwarf hostas on the market.

'Blue Mouse Ears' was just registered in 2000, and has had a meteoric rise in popularity due to its attractive blue-green color, heavy substance, and nice form. Its lavender flowers rise in perfect proportion to the plant. Even its name is cute.

Food on Saturdays

Customers are always telling us that we need a little café out here. Maybe, someday, we'll do something like that, but right now we have our hands full with plants. But this spring, there will be food every Saturday in May and the first two Saturdays in June, as well as on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26. Kramer's Chuck Wagon will be offering lunches on those days, in the form of grilled hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken and pork chop sandwiches. We'll have a couple of extra picnic tables available so that you can sit in the shade and enjoy your lunch.

The Kramers have been providing grilled catering for several years. They do a great job. In fact, we are having them cater Molly's wedding reception. There may be a couple of those Saturdays when the Kramers are already booked elsewhere, but we have the youth group from Open Prairie Church in Princeton lined up to fill in for them.

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE



We accept

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