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Annual House Is Ablaze With Color

It seems incredible that we were in business for 20 years before we started selling annuals. Maybe it was good that we carved out a niche as perennial specialists, especially with hostas, but as long as you are here anyway, you might as well have a great selection of annuals to check out. As seems to be our custom when we get into something (look what has happened in trees and shrubs), we go a little wild in our ordering, and bring in as wide a selection as we can. We are connected with a fantastic grower who turns out consistent quality. The flats of annuals are in 1801 flats, meaning that there are 18 packs in a flat, with one plant per pack. We find that this larger size will easily outperform the plants that come in the more traditional 1803 packs that you find elsewhere.

We are lucky enough to have Charon Freeberg working in the Annual House.

Charon is an expert at keeping the plants looking their best, and she is a fountain of knowledge. She was running

her own business, known as Trees and Flowers, on the west edge of Princeton when we were just getting started.



Late Iris Season?

Given the late spring we have had, one would expect the iris season to run a little late this year. The last half of May is typically the peak of the season, so the latter portion of the season may run into June a bit more than usual. A lot depends on how much heat we get in the next ten days or so. Several of the early, short, SDB's were blooming on May 1, so that should indicate that the season is only a little late.

Please note that we will be closed on Sundays, even during the peak of the iris season. However, we will be open on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25.

For those of you who have never purchased irises from us, a short explanation is in order. We take orders for the irises here in the spring.

Customers walk through the field during bloom time and select the varieties they wish to order. The orders are placed and paid for now, and we dig the orders in July, usually a few days after July 4. We can ship the iris rhizomes to you, or you can pick them up. Most of our customers pick up their orders in July so that they can see the daylily field blooming at that time.

RETAIL HOURS

From April 10 through October 10, we are open Monday through Saturday, 8:00 to 5:00. We will be open on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25. We are closed on Sundays, as well as on July 4, and Labor Day, September 7.

Open House June 11, 12 and 13

Our twenty-second annual Open House and Hosta Walk will be held on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 11, 12 and 13. 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. Look for specials on some of our Shop items. You never know what we might decide to feature.

Fruits And Veggies

We have a much better selection of fruits and vegetables than we have ever had before. Vegetables include rhubarb and asparagus, along with a good selection of tomatoes, broccoli, peppers, cucumbers, squash and cabbage.

As many of you know, we started out in the growing business, many years ago, as Horn's Berry Farm, growing strawberries and red raspberries. We have strawberry plants of our two favorite varieties from those days. 'Earliglow' is an early variety with huge, dark red, very sweet berries. Put some of those in a bowl, glob on some sour cream, and sprinkle with brown sugar, and you will think that you have died and gone to heaven. As the season progresses, the berries become smaller, but those are the ones that make the best jam. Speaking of jam, here is a recipe for the freshest tasting strawberry jam ever:

Horn's Berry Farm Strawberry Freezer Jam

1 quart of strawberries, stemmed

3 cups sugar

½ teaspoon butter

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Combine the strawberries, 2 cups of sugar, and the butter. Mash in a pan, bring to a boil, and boil for 4 minutes. Add the third cup of sugar and the lemon juice, and boil for 5 more minutes. Pour into a shallow container and let stand overnight. Put in containers and freeze. Use jam directly from the freezer (it stays spreadable), and return to freezer after each use.

I must have food on the brain. Kathy is in the kitchen baking her incredibly delicious rhubarb pie as I write this. The aroma wafting from that direction has me salivating. Speaking of rhubarb, we used to make a wonderful rhubarb juice. I'll have to find that recipe. I've heard of people who mixed it with a little vodka and 7-Up, and they seemed to enjoy it very much.

Back to business. We also have 'Surecrop' strawberries, one of the most reliable yielders. And we have some red raspberries and blackberries. 'Heritage' red raspberries bear fruit on new canes in the fall, and then bear again the following July. Many growers cut them to the ground in early winter, and just have the fall crop. 'Chester' blackberry is a thornless variety with abundant large berries. It bears fruit on last year's canes, which can be trained to wires, if you want. Cut bearing canes to the ground in the fall.

We even have a couple of apple trees. 'Honeycrisp' is one of the best eating apples ever. And our pick for the best all around apple is 'Jonathon', which is also a great eating apple, and makes fantastic pies.

Growing Annuals In Large Decorative Pots

If you fill a large piece of pottery with potting soil, not only will it be heavy and difficult to move around, but you will have to empty it for the winter. Potting soil left in a pot for the winter is apt to expand when it freezes up, and the pot may crack.

Instead, pot your annuals into a plastic pot that fits nicely into your particular piece of pottery. Use something such as an upside-down

plastic pot inside the pottery upon which to set the liner pot at the right level. Then, if you need to move the whole thing, you can pull out the liner pot and move it in parts. At the end of the season, pull out the liner pot. If you have any perennials in your display, you can plant them. And there may be some plants that you can overwinter indoors and use again next year.

The pottery can remain outdoors as long as you don't allow water to accumulate and freeze up in the bottom.



Ducks to greet you by the pond

David came home from town a few weeks ago with some baby ducks, presumably Mallards. It's been so cold that we felt that we just couldn't put them outside right away, so they spent a couple of weeks in the basement with a lamp for heat. What a delight it was to clean up after indoor ducks!

They are now outdoor ducks, and hang out on the pond in the front yard. They are fun to watch, so be sure to show your kids, and you'll find yourself smiling, as well.

