



Notes from

# HORNBAKER GARDENS

*"The Princeton Perennial People"*

22937 1140 N. Ave., Princeton, Illinois 61356

NEWSLETTER No. 13

(815) 659-3282

MARCH 2001

## Retail Hours

Starting April 9, 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 14.

Please note that we will be **closed** Easter Sunday (April 15), as well as July 4 and Labor Day (September 3).

### OPEN HOUSE AND HOSTA WALK:

We will hold our fourteenth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on June 8, 9 and 10, 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 around 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.

### WORKSHOPS

**Dividing Perennials:** We will hold two free workshops on dividing perennials on consecutive Saturdays, April 21 and 28, each at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss and demonstrate when and how to dig.  
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## Bring Your Pick-up Truck

We have gradually increased our selection of trees and shrubs over the last several years. This year we continue that trend, but we are also taking a big step up and carrying larger, more mature trees. Previously, the only way to get a tree with any size to it was to buy in balled and burlapped (B&B) trees. Such trees were difficult for us to handle because of their size and weight, and because the burlap would rot within a couple of months, in which case we would have to rewrap it.

Recently, more wholesale nurseries have begun growing trees in larger containers. Most of the trees that we have carried in the past were in 5 to 7-gallon pots and were around 3/4" in caliper. Now we will be carrying a large selection of trees in 10, 15, 20, and 25-gallon containers, with calipers of 1-1/4" to 1-3/4". Naturally, these trees will be more expensive, most falling in the range of \$100.00 to \$200.00. However, they will be a couple of years older, poised to grow into mature trees. It would also appear that container grown trees take off more quickly than B&B trees because they have not gone through the shock of having lost a substantial portion of their root systems through the digging process that

the B&B trees have undergone. And they are certainly easier to handle, with the lip of the container providing a place to grip, so that one or two people can maneuver it as necessary.

We will have over 30 different varieties of trees available in these larger sizes, including Tulip Tree, 'Greenspire' Linden, several varieties of Maple (including 'Autumn Blaze' and 'Red Sunset'), 'Heritage' River Birch, Serviceberry, Redbud, three different Beech trees, Parrotia persica, Japanese Tree Lilac, 'Skyline' Locust, 'Cimmaron' and 'Autumn Purple' Ash, Flowering Plum, four different Crab varieties (including 'Prairiefire') and Red Oak and Scarlet Oak.

One of the Scarlet Oaks is going into the ground out here. Michael Dirr is generally recognized as *the* expert in the country on trees and shrubs. He says in his book, *Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs*, "If but one oak could grace my garden, this would be the choice." We can hardly wait to get one planted. By the way, this book is a fantastic reference book with great pictures. Dirr writes in plain English, with humor, and is not afraid to give his frank opinion.

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## Rif, The Great White Wolf

If you have ever been here in the company of children, you have undoubtedly encountered Rif, the friendly dog that looks like a great white wolf. We acquired Rif about ten years ago from Rich's nephew John, who had concluded that the city was not the place for this wolf of a dog. Rich's sister Caryl, the librarian, had named Rif (for Reading Is Fun).

Rif is as gentle and mellow as they come. He may look like a wolf, but he

would be a lap dog if you gave him half a chance. Arthritis has slowed him down lately, and he only gets frisky for short spurts during cool weather. He doesn't lose his thick undercoat of fur until June. Until then, he is difficult to bathe. Last year we gave up and had him shaved. It was a great embarrassment to him. He shivered so much, and looked so naked for so long, that we don't plan to do that  
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# Spring Iris Care and Borer Control

An early spring clean-up of your iris beds is a good idea. Borers lay eggs in debris in the garden, so pulling off old, dead iris foliage and other debris around the irises and burning it should help hold the borer population down.

If you grow irises in the Midwest, sooner or later you will probably have iris borers. Borers start hatching in late April or early May, whenever night temperatures start warming up. They crawl to a young iris stalk, crawl up it, chew a notch out of the side of the leaf, and burrow into and down through the leaf, and into the rhizome, where they feed off of the rhizome for the next two or three months.

In May you can watch for notched leaves to determine if you have an infestation. If you feel the leaf with your

thumb and finger, going down from the notch, you can sometimes find the borer before he gets to the rhizome and squish him. During bloom, sometimes flower stalks will fall over because the borer has chewed up so much of the rhizome (although this can also be caused by soft rot). When you dig and divide your irises in July, any borers will be found (and destroyed). By this time, they are as thick as pencils and a couple of inches long, and the rhizomes are nearly eaten up, although there may still be viable baby rhizomes starting to grow off of the back side of the mother rhizome.

Our advice is to not be in a panic about borers. With good sanitary measures, vigilant observance, and periodic dividing, you can often keep borer infestation within tolerable limits. However, if you

know you had a bad infestation last year, or if you suspect that you have one this year, there is a chemical solution. Cygon 2E is a smelly chemical that is not particularly fun to use, but it will do the job. It is systemic in nature, meaning that it will be taken up by the iris plant, so that when the borer chews on the plant, it will ingest enough poison to kill it. Following label directions, mix up a batch in a pump sprayer and spray the iris plant all over, as well as the ground around it. Do this in mid to late April when the weather has warmed up. About ten days later, mix up a fresh batch and spray again. That should take care of the problem. We only spray every 3 or 4 years, figuring that if we break the borers' life cycle one year, it will take a few years for them to make much of a comeback.

## Rif

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again. Rif gets along very well with our collection of cats, provided that they stay out of his food bowl. During cool weather the cats will often curl up next to Rif as he loafs in the sun on the front porch. He also likes to sing with the coyotes at night. When the coyotes start their yipping and yowling, Rif adds his rich baritone voice to the harmony, but always from the safety of the front porch. He's a lover, not a fighter.

## Workshops

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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.

**Designing with Grasses:** We will hold two free workshops on grasses, one in the spring and one in the fall. The spring workshop will be held on Saturday, May 12, at 10:00 a.m., and the fall workshop will be on Saturday, September 22, 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.

# Perennial of the Year

Our most well attended workshop ever was held last fall. The subject: ornamental grasses. We are very pleased with this year's pick for Perennial of the Year. For the first time, a grass has been named as Perennial of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association. *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' is a versatile, attractive, and low maintenance ornamental grass that is very easy to grow. It is one of the earliest grasses to plume out, with its inflorescences appearing as early as late June. The plumes are first light pink and later turn golden tan. Despite its early flowering, this grass remains ornamental through fall and well into winter.

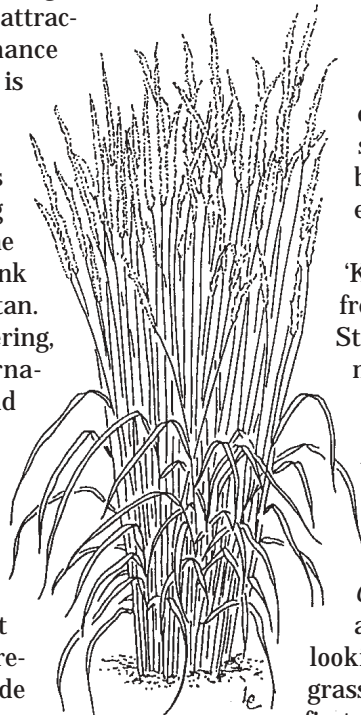
The growth habit is vertical with a tuft of foliage 3 feet tall, with stiffly erect flower stems to 5 feet in height. The narrow, tight habit of this cultivar creates an 18-inch wide clump. It is excellent as a specimen plant, providing a vertical accent in the landscape. Some

designers use it for creating a fast developing screen. When planted as a screen, or otherwise planted in masses, the golden tan plumes combine to form a horizontal band of gold. The slightest breeze sets this grass in motion. The graceful movement is a highlight for any landscape.

Plant 'Karl Foerster' in full sun to part shade. Cut back to 6 inches in late winter or early spring. Seed pods are sterile, so this grass will not be invasive or create unwanted seedlings.

Floral designers appreciate 'Karl Foerster' for its use in fresh or dried arrangements. Stems cut before the flowers mature will last for months in an arrangement while maintaining the golden tan color.

This grass combines well in the landscape with late summer and fall-blooming perennials such as *Coreopsis*, *Echinacea*, *Liatris* and *Rudbeckia*. If you are looking for an early pluming grass, or if you haven't taken that first step and tried ornamental grasses, try *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster'. It's a sure fire winner.



# What's New At Hornbaker's?

**Hostas:** It wouldn't be a new year without several new "must have" hostas. 'Old Glory' is an excellent yellow-centered, green-edged sport of the popular, all yellow 'Glory', one of our favorite golds. Another great yellow-centered hosta is 'Morning Light', a stunning reverse of 'Twilight'. We look for 'Morning Light' to be a very popular variety.

'Titanic' is a majestic sport of 'Sum and Substance', with wide gold margins against dark green centers. It will be huge (and unsinkable). 'Revolution' is a sport of 'Loyalist', with white centers that are speckled or misted with green flecks. Another misted hosta is 'Korean Snow', which is a misted *yingeri* hybrid. Hybridizers are trying to get red color into the leaves and flowers of hostas. 'Red October' is said to have red leaf petioles, with the red extending an inch onto the top of the green leaf blades.

Our clump of 'Color Glory' in the garden has caught many an eye over the years. Although we do not carry this variety, we now have 'Cadillac', which is touted as being an improved 'Color Glory', with brilliant gold, corrugated centers and wide green margins. 'Gray Cole' is another one that has attracted lots of attention, and which we are now able to offer. It forms a large clump with corrugated gray-green leaves. We also have a few starts of 'Grey Ghost' to offer. This unusual sport of 'Blue Angel' starts out nearly white in spring, then turns gold, and finally blue.

**Iris:** The iris is, without doubt, the queen of the May garden. Consider extending the iris season by adding some of the dwarf varieties, which start blooming two weeks earlier than the tall bearded varieties, usually during the first week of May. We carry 11 of these varieties, including a couple of new ones. 'Baby Blessed' is light yellow with a small white spot on the falls, and is touted as a very dependable rebloomer. 'Smell the Roses' is violet blue with a sweet fragrance.

Speaking of extending the iris season, check out 'Total Recall', a relatively new variety that blooms in May and again in August. It is a lovely light yellow with large flowers. We have other reblooming varieties that bloom as late as October. A bouquet of irises in the house in the fall is a real treat.

**Daylilies:** We even have a new reblooming daylily, 'Earl Watts', a tetraploid, gold with peach overlay, which blooms early and again in August. Other new varieties include 'Strawberry Candy', a tetraploid pink with a rose-red eyezone, winner of the Stout Medal in 1998 as the number one daylily among enthusiasts; 'Mary's Gold', a giant gold with blinding impact; 'Siloam Grace Stamile', a choice miniature, red with a dark halo; 'Siloam Tiny Tim', a blue-lavender blend with a smoky blue eye; and 'Chance Encounter', a mulberry colored show stopper.

**Grasses:** We will have eight new varieties of *Miscanthus* this year, including 'Puenktchen' (Little Dot), which is a shorter version of Zebra Grass, standing 4-5' tall. 'Grosse Fontane' (Large Fountain) is an early bloomer, as early as August, with a fountain-like appearance 6-7 feet tall. And for those looking for a tall grass, check out 'Goliath', a September bloomer standing 8-9'tall.

**Other perennials:** 'Jack Frost' is an exciting new form of *Brunnera*, with a frosty silver overlay and light green veining, resembling crackled porcelain, shimmering in the shade garden. It has the same beautiful blue forget-me-not flowers in May as regular *Brunnera*.

*Polemonium* 'Apricot Delight' is a Jacob's Ladder displaying apricot flowers with a tinge of lilac, blooming profusely for a long time, often covering the entire plant. Two forms of dwarf *Columbine* (*Aquilegia flabellata*), 'Alba' and 'Ministar', have been very popular. Now a third form, 'Cameo', adds pink to the white and blue of the first two varieties. These dwarf plants, standing 6-10" tall, are perfect for rockeries or partly shaded spots.

Another *Aquilegia* is worth noting. 'Remembrance' is named in honor of the memory of the slain students and teacher of Columbine High School, and a portion of the proceeds from the production of this plant benefit organizations that promote diversity and tolerance in schools. Its petals and spurs are rich, shiny violet-blue, and it stands 24" tall.

For those of you who don't have room for a normal sized Butterfly Bush, there now is 'Petite Purple', a lovely dwarf only 2 feet tall.

## Hosta of the Year

Starting in 1996, the American Hosta Growers Association, of which we are a member, has named a Hosta of the Year. This year's selection is 'June', a hosta that caused a great amount of excitement when it was first introduced to the U.S. in 1993. 'June' has become one of our best selling hostas for the last four years.

A sport of the popular 'Halcyon', 'June' undergoes significant seasonal changes. In spring the leaf center is light green, overlaid with a bluish bloom. By July the leaf is gold centered with blue margins. A dose of morning sun makes the centers lighter. 'June' is well deserving of its designation as Hosta of the Year.

Worth checking out is a similar variety, 'Katherine Lewis', also a sport of 'Halcyon', which has narrower blue margins, and whose centers turn almost white by fall. This variety was the most impressive hosta in our propagation beds last September.

## Pickup Truck

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So bring your pick-up truck. These trees are not going to fit in the car or the mini van. We will wrap the tree tops with burlap to keep them from getting wind-blown on the ride home.

Not all trees are available in the larger sizes, so we will still have a good selection of trees in the smaller containers, including some that we also have in the larger sizes.

**APPLE TREES:** Our apple orchard is nearly 25 years old, so it is time to set out some new trees. We had to buy 50 trees in order to get a wholesale price, but we only need 20 or so for ourselves. The rest we will pot up and make available to our customers. The varieties that we have ordered include Enterprise, Stark Blushing Golden, Granny Smith, Starkspur Red Rome Beauty, Fortune, Morren's Jonagored, and Mutsu. All are dwarf varieties, meaning that they will grow 10-15 feet in height, and they are mid to late blooming and mid to late ripening, since we want them primarily for cider and for winter storage. The price will be \$34.99 each. They should arrive in early April.

# Pond Talk:

*Newsletter coming soon!*

We have started a separate newsletter devoted to ponds and subjects related to water features, rather than taking up space on those subjects here in the main newsletter. If you marked that you were interested in ponds when you sent a postcard in last year, or when you signed up to be on the mailing list, then you will be receiving that newsletter shortly. If you are not on the list for the pond newsletter, but want to be, just drop us a line. We will send you one, and put you on the list for future pond newsletters.

## Name Your Own Daylily

For those of you who missed it last year, a small section of our daylily field contains seedlings hybridized by our friend Fred Smith. Fred has been hybridizing for many years, and these seedlings are his most recent results. They are new, unique hybrids. You can take your pick for \$15.00 each. We will dig them on the spot and drop them in a plastic bag, which you can take with you, whereupon you will be the proud (and only) owner of this new variety, which you can name, and even register, if you so desire. Name it after your spouse, your child, your dog, or give it a fancy flowery name or an outrageous, provocative name. It will be your daylily to name as you please.

## Granite Is Forever

A little over a year ago, at a winter trade show, we were thrilled to discover a new supplier of hand-carved granite and marble garden decorations. Here were high quality granite benches and Japanese lanterns at prices much lower than we had seen before. We ordered some in last year, and just loved them. So did our customers.

This year we will have a much larger selection of pieces from which to choose, including benches, lanterns, spheres, statues, stepping stones, fountains, birdbaths, bowls and basins. These are not garden do-dads that you will pitch in a couple of years, but hand-carved works of art that will be around for your grandchildren to cherish in their old age. The passing years will only improve the character of these pieces.



## HORNBAKER GARDENS

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Princeton, Illinois 61356

We accept



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### EASIEST DIRECTIONS TO HORNBAKER GARDENS:

From the intersection of I-180 and 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.

