



Notes from

HORNBAKER GARDENS

"The Princeton Perennial People"

RR 4 Princeton, Illinois 61356

NEWSLETTER No. 7

(815) 659-3282

APRIL 1996

Kris Hahne joins staff

We are pleased to be able to offer landscaping services this year because of the addition of Kris Hahne to our staff.

Kris grew up in the LaSalle-Peru area. She graduated from the University of Illinois in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry. She worked for several years as a horticulturist/groundskeeper at a country club in Louisiana and another in North Carolina, where she designed and installed flower beds and areas of trees and shrubs. For the last five years, she

has owned and operated her own landscaping business in North Carolina, specializing in the design, installation, and maintenance of flowering organic gardens, trees and shrubs.

Kris is a personable and enthusiastic gardener. As do we, she especially likes to garden using organic methods, including the use of a single-digging method of preparing a new flower bed. We are glad to have her with us, and we know that those of you who want some help with your landscaping will enjoy working with her.

Mark Your Calendar

Please mark your calendars for any of the peak bloom seasons and dates that interest you. What with the cost of postage and an increasingly sizeable mailing list, it is becoming prohibitively expensive to mail out postcards as reminders. We will probably again mail out cards to remind you of the peak of iris season and our open house, but we plan to discontinue mailing out cards for daylily and mum seasons.

Retail Hours

Starting April 15, we will be open seven days a week, Monday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 12:00 to 5:00. We will be closed July 4 and Labor Day, September 2, 1996.

OPEN HOUSE AND HOSTA WALK: We will hold our ninth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on June 7, 8 and 9, when the hostas are looking their best. Refreshments will be served, and drawings for prizes will be held each day.

PEAK BLOOM SEASON: Just a reminder that the peak of iris bloom is usually the last two weeks of May. Daylilies have an extended bloom season, but the peak season for us seems to be the last three weeks of July. Our "Fall Flower Days" will be the weekends of September 14-15 and 21-22, when the color and selection in our field of 10,000 mums should be best.

What's New

Hosta fever is running high (as usual) here at Hornbaker Gardens. Rich not only can't shake the "hosta bug", but doesn't even want to. As a result, we have a whole batch of new and exciting hostas to offer this year.

'Minuteman' is a sport of 'Patriot', with very wide, pure white margins wrapped around a rich, glossy green center. The leaves have good substance and are slightly rippled, somewhat cupped, and maintain their dramatic color well.

'Night Before Christmas' is a larger and more vigorous grower than its parent, 'White Christmas'. It has a thicker leaf with green margins and a two inch crisp, white center, and good color retention.

The prize for best new name goes to 'Elvis Lives', a medium-sized clump with lance shaped blue leaves that are highly ruffled.

'Abba Dabba Do' is a green-centered sport of 'Sun Power', which is one of the best yellow varieties. These varieties form impressive, large, semi-upright clumps.

Yellow-centered varieties are among the most popular, and 'Guacamole' is another fine one. It forms a large, open mound of glossy, rounded gold leaves with dark green margins. The lavender flowers are fragrant. This variety is said to be a fast grower if given some direct sunlight.

We finally got our hands on some 'Queen Josephine', which we have admired for several years. It forms a medium clump with very shiny, dark green leaves with creamy margins. Purple flowers bloom in July.

Another variety with shiny leaves is 'Lakeside Black Satin', a medium clump with incredibly dark green leaves that are somewhat ruffled. The flowers are dark purple.

'Saint Elmo's Fire' has extremely bright yellow leaves with white margins in the spring. The yellow turns to green in June, but the next flush of leaves is bright yellow, producing two different colors of variegated leaves on the same plant.

Continued on page 3

Success With Astilbes

Placement and watering are the keys to growing astilbes. With most plants, when they get dry, they droop, so we water them and they perk back up. When astilbes get dry, their tops "frizz" or dry up. The plant has sacrificed its top to save its roots. Once it gets moisture, the plant starts growing a new top again, but if the dry spell occurs in June before the plant was scheduled to bloom,



there may be no bloom that year. The unhappy gardener then might conclude that astilbes are not hardy, difficult to

grow, or otherwise unreliable.

In fact, astilbes are extremely hardy in our area. Place them where they will not get too much direct afternoon sun or drying wind. Some morning sun or filtered sun is best. Thus, they fit in well in beds that contain hostas and other shade plants. Make sure that they are provided with adequate moisture throughout the growing season. A

year-round mulch is a great help in holding moisture in the soil. A sprinkling of slow-release fertilizer around the plants in

the spring is beneficial.

Although astilbes vary in height from a few inches to over three feet, the most popular varieties tend to be in the range of 18"-24". One plant by itself does not make much of a statement, so we generally advise grouping five or more of the same variety together in order to achieve a nice effect.

Astilbes are probably best utilized as fillers rather than as featured plants in the bed. We like to tuck groups of them here and there, between hostas and other plants, where their plumes will provide a

Continued on page 3

Perennial Plant Of The Year

As a form of promotion of outstanding perennials for gardens, the Perennial Plant Association has announced that its members have chosen Penstemon 'Husker Red' as the 1996 Perennial Plant of the Year.

Penstemon is a large genus of native plants found over areas of the United States and Canada, especially in dry locations. Commonly called Beardtongue, it varies widely in flower colors and sizes, plant heights and growing habits.

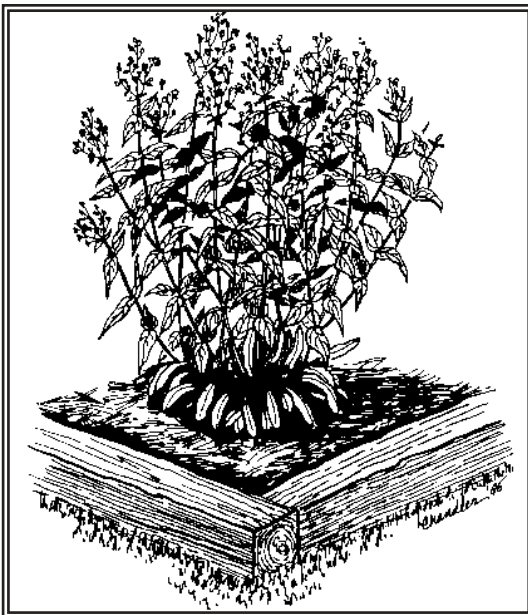
'Husker Red' is a white-flowered, red-foliated form of Penstemon that was selected and introduced in 1983 by Dr. Dale Lindgren of the University of Nebraska. Penstemon is native to open woods, prairies and fields from South Dakota to Maine and is naturalized in several eastern Canadian provinces.

When 'Husker Red' plants are well

established, height averages 30" with up to fifty flowers on each of the twenty or more flower stalks during July and August. Perhaps 'Husker Red's' most valuable mark in the garden is the rich, bronzed foliage which provides striking contrast not only with its own masses of white flowers, but also with neighboring green foliage.

In the landscape, 'Husker Red' can be massed at the back of the perennial border. When used as a specimen plant, it

is more effective somewhat closer to the front of the border where its foliage can be appreciated all summer. It only reaches its full height when in flower, and the flowers on a single specimen plant would not be so dense as to hide the plants behind it. It works well in combination with Veronica 'Sunny Border Blue', Coreopsis 'Moonbeam' and silver-foliaged plants like Achillea 'Moonshine'.



Spring Workshops Scheduled

Dividing Perennials

We will again hold our free workshop on dividing perennials on Saturday, April 27, at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss and demonstrate when and how to dig, divide and replant various perennials, including hostas and daylilies. No reservations required.

Children's Workshop

On Saturday, May 11, at 10:00 a.m. we will hold a workshop for children, ages 6-12. Discussions and demonstrations will center on basic perennial garden design, dividing perennials, planting a bed, and maintaining it. This will be a "hands on" experience, so the children should wear appropriate clothing. Cost of the workshop will be \$10.00 per child, and each child will take home a free perennial. Cookies and lemonade will also be served. We will try to conclude by 11:30. Enrollment is limited, so please call (815) 659-3282 to reserve space.

Try These For Fall Color

Naturally, when we are shopping for plants in the spring, those that are flowering at that time tend to grab our attention. But if we plan ahead, we can make sure that we have some flowering plants blooming in our gardens in the fall, also.

Asters are an excellent choice for sunny beds. Most of the good varieties are hybrids of *A. novae-angliae* (New England Aster) and *A. novi-belgii* (New York Aster), and vary in height from one foot to more than four feet.

Because of the fine blues, purples, and reds, asters provide some of the colors that garden mums cannot. There are no orange or yellow asters. A couple of tall varieties were very popular in our display gardens last fall: 'Alma Potschke' is a stunning bright pink, and 'Hella Lacy' is an eye-catching blue-violet.

When a more compact plant is called for, try 'Purple Dome', which forms an 18"

cushion covered with a profusion of dark purple flowers. The best short red is 'Alert', which only grows 12"-15".

Asters do best if they are divided every two or three years. Some of taller varieties are vigorous growers, so their spread needs to be controlled. Shorter varieties benefit from division in order to keep them healthy. Plants that are growing too thickly can be susceptible to mildew. However, division is easy. Just dig up the whole plant, and reset small divisions from the outside of the plant.

For shadier locations, try Anemones (Japanese Anemones), which do best in filtered sun or morning sun/afternoon shade situations. They dislike summer drought, but have been outstanding performers for us in beds that receive afternoon shade and are well mulched, to hold in the moisture.

Most of the fall-blooming varieties

grow to 30"-36". Pink or white flowers are held on wiry stems above attractive, dark green foliage. We like to use Anemones between or behind large hostas, where they grow inconspicuously all summer, and then provide their lovely late-season flowers above the hosta foliage.

'Prince Henry', 'Bressingham Glow', and 'September Charm' are all good single pink varieties. 'Pamina' is a dark rose double. 'Honorine Jobert' is a lovely white single.

Spring Tips, Reminders

IRIS: Pull off any dead foliage remaining from last year and get it out of the garden. If you plan to use a Cygon spray to control borers, spray once around April 20-25, and again 10-14 days later. This is when the borers are hatching, crawling up the leaves, and chewing their way into your plants.

FLOWERING SHRUBS: The best time to prune flowering shrubs such as dwarf lilac, forsythia, and spirea is generally just after they are done blooming. Trimming the bushes back in the fall or spring not only cuts off much of the wood that will be blooming, but also destroys the gracefulness and natural beauty of the bush when it blooms. If the bush is growing too large for you, wait until it is done blooming, then prune it back severely to the height you want. You may think that you are butchering the plant, but don't worry, it will start filling out again very quickly.

GRASSES: Cut back your ornamental grasses to 3 or 4 inches of stubble. Do it now, before the new growth starts or it will be almost impossible to cut out the old stems without also cutting the new growth.

WOOD POPPIES: From the many comments that we get about this plant, we know that it is becoming a very popular shade plant with our customers. It will self sow, so if you want more of them, just look around the base of your plant this spring. Chances are that you will discover seedlings. Let them put on a few leaves, and then transplant them, they grow rapidly into a nice plant. Put some in the woods and let them naturalize.

Astilbes *Continued from page 2*

touch of color when in bloom, and their ferny foliage will provide contrasting texture and background the rest of the season.

Astilbes can and should be divided every four years in order to maintain vigor. Divisions are usually plentiful, so there is

soon enough to plant in groups in several new locations.

We carry seventeen varieties of astilbes. Some of our favorites include 'Fanal' (red), 'Bridal Veil' (white), and 'Rheinland' (pink).

What's new

Continued from page 1

We will have a good supply of Tokudama 'Aureonebulosa' this year. Last year we were short on this much sought after variety.

This newsletter is in danger of becoming the ravings of a hosta maniac, so we will just list the names of a few more new varieties that we will have on hand this year: 'Tambourine', 'Van Wade', 'Rascal', 'Blue Betty Lou', and 'Lakeport Blue'.

Yes, we also have some new perennials other than hostas. One of the showiest plants in our new display bed last fall was an Aster called 'Hella Lacy', which grows three to four feet tall with deep violet-purple flowers. By the time this plant bloomed last fall, we were already sold out of it. We'll try not to let that happen this year.

Expect to see quite a few new varieties of Heuchera (Coral Bells) come onto the market in the next few years.

The purple-leafed 'Palace Purple' has

been very popular since it became available a few years ago. We have had 'Pewter Veil' for a couple of years. It also has purple leaves, but with silver veining. A new one for us this year is 'Chocolate Ruffles', which has ruffled leaves that are chocolate on top and purple underneath.

We have had many requests for Japanese iris, and will have six varieties available this year. Japanese irises like moisture, and come in colors of white, blue, purple, pink and maroon, often streaked.

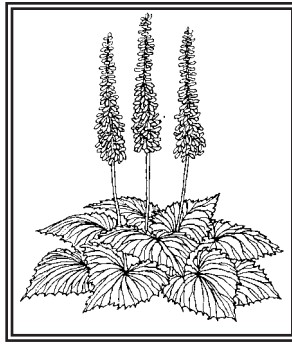
Some nice low-growing plants include Fragaria 'Shades of Pink' (a pink-flowering strawberry), and two cute Veronicas. *V. spicata* 'Blue Nana' is only a few inches tall with bright blue flowers, and *V. spicata* 'Heidekind' is similar in size, but with rose flowers.

We also will have some new varieties of Buddleia (Butterfly Bush), Clematis, Astilbe, and Pulmonaria, to name a few.

LIGULARIA 'The Rocket'

A plant that always draws the attention of visitors to our gardens is Ligularia 'The Rocket'. The genus Ligularia is characterized by its handsome leaves. All varieties of Ligularia require humus-rich soil and abundant moisture. Although most varieties are grown primarily for their foliage, Ligularia 'The Rocket' is also grown for its flowers, tall yellow spires that shoot up five feet in the air above the large, jagged, dark green leaves.

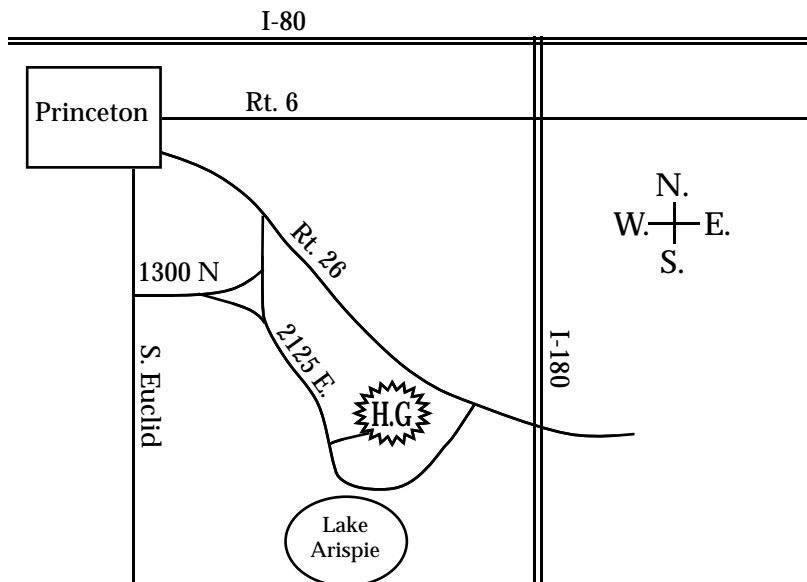
Ligularia is extremely hardy and easy to grow. The main problem is finding the right spot. If the plant receives too much sun, especially in the hot afternoon, the leaves will wilt to the ground, even if the plant is receiving adequate moisture. However, the flowers will lean



toward the light if grown in too much shade, and the plant will grow and flower better if it receives some sun. Thus, a location where it will get filtered sun is best. If a choice has to be made, morning sun is less harsh on the plant than afternoon sun.

Space is also a consideration. 'The Rocket' will fill a space five feet in diameter at maturity. Ligularia przewalskii is a somewhat smaller plant with leaves and flowers just like 'The Rocket'.

Two other varieties worth mentioning are L. 'Othello' and L. 'Desdemona'. Both have large leaves that are purple bronze on top and bright purple underneath. They can tolerate a little more shade than L. 'The Rocket'.



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.