



Notes from

# HORNBAKER GARDENS

*"The Princeton Perennial People"*

22937 1140 N. Ave., Princeton, Illinois 61356

NEWSLETTER No. 21

(815) 659-3282

MARCH 2003

## Retail Hours:

### (Closed Sundays)

We have decided to set April 10 as our opening date each year and October 10 as our last day to be open each year (providing that neither of those days is a Sunday), in order to make it easy to remember. Our hours will be 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Saturday. We will be closed on Sundays.

Please note that we will be **closed** on July 4 and Labor Day (September 1).

### Open House And Hosta Walk

We will hold our sixteenth annual Open House and Hosta Walk on a Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 12, 13, and 14, 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 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.

## Deals On Hosta Clumps

Last fall we did a major digging of our hosta propagation beds. Some of the varieties had been in the ground for three or four years without being dug. We decided how many we needed to pot up for the next year or two and how many we needed to put back into the ground for future propagation. Whatever was left over, we left in large chunks, and potted them into 3-gallon pots to sell as clumps. We just started selling potted clumps of hostas during the last couple of years, and the customers seemed to love them.

We designated one of our hoopouses as the clump house. As the digging progressed, it soon became apparent that we were going to have a lot more varieties available in clumps than we had anticipated, and that the clumps were going to fill the clump house and spill over into some of the other houses. We had figured

that we would be able to offer 50 or 60 good varieties in clump form. Instead, we have around 140 varieties in clumps!

While it is great to be able to offer all of these big, gorgeous clumps of hostas to our customers, it is causing us a space problem. We simply can't afford to devote as much space to hosta clumps as these clumps are presently taking up.

The light bulb finally clicked on in our brains: It's time for a hosta clump sale!

### HERE'S THE DEAL:

**Buy 3 or 4 clumps, and take a 15% discount. Buy 5-9 clumps, and take a 20% discount.**

**Buy 10 or more clumps, and take a 25% discount.**

I can't even believe that I just typed this.

*continued on back*

## What's New At Hornbakers?

Over 200 new varieties of plants—that's what's new. One of our customers suggested that we put a list of new plants on our website, so that is what we have done. You can get a complete listing there. Here are some of the plants that are new for 2003.

**Hostas:** 'Risky Business' is a stunning sport of 'Striptease'. It has very dark green foliage with a narrow, pure white streak down the center. 'Lakeside Shore Master' is a good-sized blue with a yellow splash in the center of each leaf. 'Captain Kirk' is an attention grabbing, bright yellow with green margins. It has exceptional substance. These three top our list of 20 new ones.

**Daylilies:** 'Daring Dilemma' and 'Daring Deception', both hybridized by Salter, are pink with a purple eye and purple edge. The latter is heavily ruffled.

'Wineberry Candy' has a similar color description, but is also fragrant. 'Sunday Gloves' is near-white, with soft yellow centers, and is fragrant. 'Red Flag' is a late blooming red. Use it to extend your daylily season.

**Iris:** We have 10 new varieties of irises, including a couple of rebloomers. If you are not familiar with reblooming irises, they bloom in May with the rest of the crop, and then bloom again in the fall, anywhere from August to November. It is very exciting to bring a fresh bouquet of irises into the house in late fall.

'Autumn Circus', a white with blue-violet plicata, and 'Feed Back', a large, ruffled blue, are listed as rebloomers. 'Honky Tonk Blues' is a Dykes Medal winner. It is dark blue with mottled gray-white infused in the falls. 'Salsa

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# Perennial Plant Of The Year: *Leucanthemum* 'Becky'

The Perennial Plant Association has named *Leucanthemum* 'Becky' as the Perennial Plant of the Year for 2003. 'Becky' is a Shasta daisy with bright white petals surrounding a yellow center, atop sturdy stems which don't flop, even though they grow three feet tall. A long season of bloom, and hardiness to Zone 4, make it an outstanding and dependable perennial for most of the country. We have been growing and selling 'Becky' for a few years now, and it has proven to be a beautiful, hardy, and dependable plant.



Shasta daisies were formerly listed as members of the *Chrysanthemum* genus. Contemporary nomenclature now lists them as *Leucanthemum*. The Shasta daisy is a hybrid created by Luther Burbank in 1890, and apparently named because the clean white petals reminded him of the snow on Mount Shasta in California. Several selections of Shasta daisy now exist.

'Becky' has been known since at least 1960, when it was discovered in a garden in Atlanta, Georgia. It was shared by a handful of people for several years. Finally, the larger perennial growers learned of the plant and began growing it, so that it is now widely available. It has been very popular with us and with our customers.

Shasta daisies grow best in full sun and well-drained soil. Avoid low spots that stay excessively wet during the winter. Deadheading encourages rebloom and extends the flowering season into autumn. The stems stand up tall even after a heavy rain. 'Becky' makes an excellent cut flower, and it attracts butterflies.

Flowering begins in late June or early July, and continues through August, and even into September if deadheaded. This makes it a great companion for some of the other summer bloomers, such as *Perovskia* (Russian Sage), *Veronica* 'Royal Candles', *Rudbeckia*, *Echinacea*, and ornamental grasses. For a little extra zing, add *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer', a brilliant scarlet red, to the mix.

## Big Chair Tumbles

Last fall, we debated the possibility of taking down the "Big Chair". Some of the cross pieces had rotted off at the ends and come loose, making the chair less sturdy. We decided to plant some Silver Lace Vines on each leg to try to get some strong vines growing all over it in order to hold it together. (These are what we should have planted when we first built the chair. Instead, we tried Wisteria, which didn't grow tall fast enough.) Perhaps the vines, together with a little repair work in the spring, would solidify

the chair.

We should have done some repair work in the fall, because in December, a big wind blew the chair down. It is presently lying up on the hill like so many matchsticks. Now we have another spot to plant a new tree. At least we won't have any more conversations that start like this:

"What's that?"

"That's the Big Chair"

"What's it for?"

## 'Regal Splendor' Is Hosta Of The Year

For years, we have listed 'Regal Splendor' as our favorite hosta when voting in the popularity poll in the American Hosta Society. So we are especially pleased that it was named Hosta of the Year for 2003 by the American Hosta Growers Association.

'Regal Splendor' is a sport of 'Krossa Regal', and has the same blue-gray color

as the parent plant, but with creamy margins. The foliage is elongated, with undulating margins. The clump grows very upright, in a vase shaped manner, and stands nearly three feet tall, spreading to four or five feet wide as it matures. The flower stalks shoot five feet into the air in August, with lavender flowers.

Truly a specimen hosta, 'Regal

Splendor' makes an excellent centerpiece for the shade garden. If you have a spot that calls for a single, large hosta, this would make a great choice. It may not be as flashy as some other variegated hostas. Rather, it makes a statement that is subtle, elegant, and regal.

## Free Workshops

We will hold the following free workshops this year. Bring along a lawn chair and dress for the weather.

**Dividing Perennials:** We will hold our annual workshop on dividing perennials on Saturday, April 26, at 10:00 a.m. We will discuss and demonstrate when and how to dig, 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.

**Aquatic plants:** A pond opens up a whole new area of gardening. On Saturday, May 17, we will hold a workshop to discuss aquatic plants. We will discuss water lilies, lotus, and marginal plants, including both hardy and tropical varieties. Plants are such an important element in maintaining a clean, attractive pond. We'll discuss planting techniques, fertilization requirements, winter care, and general

maintenance. No advance registration is necessary.

**Grasses:** We will hold two workshops on grasses, one in the spring and one in the fall. The spring workshop will be held on Saturday, May 3, at 10:00 a.m., and the fall workshop will be on Saturday, September 20, 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.

# Beautiful Beeches...a great gift to pass on

Many of you who have shopped for trees here during the last few years know what big fans we are of Beech trees. Kathy and I were introduced to Tri-Color Beeches when we saw them in gardens during National Hosta Society conventions many years ago in Indiana and Ohio. We wondered if Beeches were hardy in our area, and wondered why we didn't see them. Then we realized that we just weren't looking very hard. The huge purple-leafed tree in the back yard of the Hampshire Colony Church in Princeton, which we attend, is a European Beech. A visit to the Chicago Botanical Gardens a few years ago opened our eyes to the beauty and hardiness of the Fernleaf Beech and the Weeping European Beech. Now I just can't seem to get enough of these trees.

Depending on how old you are, the main beneficiaries of your planting a Beech tree may be your children, or your grandchildren. They do grow slowly, but what a great gift to pass on!

The varieties that we carry are all varieties of European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). 'Riversii' has bright reddish purple leaves that positively glow in the spring when backlit with sunlight. The foliage matures to a coppery purple in the summer. It will grow into a large shade tree. A couple of fastigate (tall and narrow) forms include 'Dawyck Purple' and 'Rohan Obelisk'. Both have purple foliage and grow in the form of a purple sentinel.

Green leafed varieties include 'Asplenifolia' and 'Pendula'. 'Asplenifolia' is known as the Fernleaf Beech. Its

foliage is gracefully cut (dissected), imparting a fernlike texture. It can grow 50' tall and 40' wide. 'Pendula', as Michael Dirr points out, has a personality all its own. Branches may weep, dip, dive, arch, or otherwise permutate in all directions. The specimens that we have seen generally weep around the perimeter, creating a secret, somewhat hidden, enclosure within its branches. I can see our great-grandchildren playing inside one of these hideouts someday.

The Tri-Color Beech puts on a real display of bright red/pink foliage in the spring. Eventually, the leaves turn purple with touches of cream and green. It is best planted where it will receive some afternoon shade, or as an understory tree, where it receives filtered shade throughout the day. In full sun, the leaves may scorch somewhat. It tends to grow slowly and irregularly, giving an artistic or Japanese look to the garden.

All of these beeches have interesting, smooth, gray, elephant hide-like bark, giving some winter interest, when the foliage is not there to steal the show.

## What's new? continued from page 1

Rio' is a spicy burgundy wine with a dash of yellow in the stylearms and beard.

**Grasses:** *Calamagrostis brachytricha* is a Reed Grass with long, rosy-purple, bottlebrush plumes in early fall. We got our hands on a start a couple of years ago, and it matured into a gorgeous clump last fall. Last fall, we saw a clump of *Panicum* 'Cloud Nine' in Chicago, and knew that we had to get some. It is similar to 'Heavy Metal', but even bluer, and a little taller, but still a sturdy, upright grower.

**Perennials:** Last summer, everyone wanted to know what that blue flowering clump was in the front yard. It was *Campanula* 'Bernice', a dependable and easy to grow Bellflower that grows 16"-20" tall. Another plant in the front yard that was often asked about was *Kalameris* 'Hortensis', a Double Japanese Aster that blooms with little white flowers for a long time in the summer. We didn't have any last year, but we do this year, along with a variegated form, 'Shogun'. Next to the big pond in the front yard is a Peony named 'Thumbelina', a cute clump only 15 inches tall with single, rosy pink flowers. We saved this one from what we sold two or three years ago, and this year we bought in some more because so many people admired our clump.

Another Peony that is being billed as one of the best red doubles is 'Red Charm'. 'Coral Charm' and 'Coral Supreme' sound like a couple of beautiful coral Peonies.

*Heuchera* 'Mardi Gras' is a new Coral Bell with huge leaves in variegated colors ranging from coral to orange, green to gray. Another interesting plant is *Heucherella*, which is a cross between *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*, and is commonly known as Foamy Bells. A new variety, 'Heart of Darkness', has tri-colored foliage of dark maroon, silver-gray, and green, in a short clump only 8 inches tall, with white flowers.

**Trees and Shrubs:** We should have a few *Cornus mas* 'Golden Glory', a cute Cornelian Cherry Dogwood that starts the spring with a cheery mist of yellow flowers, and will make a small specimen tree no more than 20 feet tall. It is very durable and pest free. *Aesculus parviflora* (Bottlebrush Buckeye) is a fantastic shrub for late spring flowers. It is a colonizing plant, forming a broad mound with white flowers, 8-12 feet tall and 8-15 feet wide. It is best in part shade. Plant it where it has room to spread.

*Salix integra* 'Hakuro Nishiki' is a variegated Willow with pink stems and green, pink, and white variegated foliage. It comes in shrub form, 4-6' tall and wide, and in a grafted tree form (a shrub grafted on a standard). It is best planted in some partial shade.

We have had trouble getting our hands on the very fragrant *Viburnum carlesii* (Koreanspice Viburnum) and *Viburnum x juddii* (Judd Viburnum). We should have a good supply of both this year.

## Fighting The Drought

Drought conditions have been causing problems in the Midwest the past two or three years. The plants that get away from us tend to be the biggest, most valuable plants on our land: the trees—especially the evergreen trees and shrubs. By the time that we notice that they are not looking so good, it is usually too late. The easiest ones to lose are those planted in the last year or two. Their root systems simply aren't out far enough into the soil to reach moisture in drought conditions. Mulching around trees and shrubs will help hold in the moisture, but in extremely dry periods, this is not always enough.

Obviously, we need to provide moisture. The trick is not necessarily to water often, but to water deeply when we do water. Frequent watering often promotes shallow root growth, since the roots will stay up near the surface where it is moist. Later, if we quit watering for a while, these shallow roots dry up quickly, and the plant suffers or dies.

Leave a hose dripping or trickling at the base of a tree for several hours so that the moisture has a chance to soak deeply into the ground. The roots will follow that moisture down into the ground, making for a stronger, healthier, more drought-tolerant tree.

# Millstones And Troughs From China

Last year, we had some antique millstones from China. As soon as we mentioned them in one of our newsletters, they sold out very quickly. They are actual granite, antique millstones. The same people who make the hand carved granite lanterns that we carry are picking them up all across the China countryside, where they are no longer being used, and shipping them over here.

They sell for \$180.00, and are worth it for their antiquity, alone. Customers seem to be using them in all sorts of ways—as a bubbling fountain, as an

extra large stepping stone or standing spot, or just as a display piece, either flat or standing on a side.

This year, we will also have some antique troughs from China, where they were used to water livestock. They are made of rough marble, and are drilled with a hole in the bottom so that they can be used as planters, although they come with a rubber stopper in case you want to use them as a basin to hold water. Like the millstones, they could be made into a bubbling fountain. It will be interesting to see how people incorporate them into

their gardens. They sell for \$350.00, and come in irregular sizes since they were chiseled out by hand several decades ago.



## Hosta Clumps

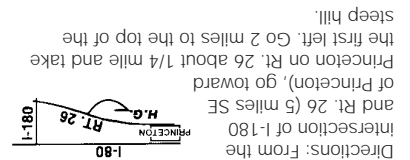
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We'll get a Hosta Clump Price List posted on our website right away so you can check out the varieties and prices, but you're going to have to see for yourself just what a deal this is. We priced these clumps very reasonably in the first place, considering the maturity of the plants

and the number of eyes in each pot. Prices run from \$15.00 to \$50.00 per clump.

There will be some beautiful clumps of varieties such as Blue Angel, Big Daddy, Regal Splendor (this year's Hosta of the Year), Sagae, Christmas Tree, Fragrant

Bouquet, Janet, Love Pat, Krossa Regal, Sun Power, Summer Fragrance, Torchlight, and Yellow River, just to tease you with a few that we have in good supply. In the case of some varieties, we just have a handful of clumps, so shopping early will be a good move if you are interested in these clumps.



**GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE**



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