



Notes from

# HORNBAKER GARDENS, Inc.

NEWSLETTER No.101, SPRING 2022

**Opening Day is Sunday,  
April 10 at Noon!**

www.hornbakergardens.com  
email: mail@hornbakergardens.com  
22937 1140 N. Ave.,  
Princeton, Illinois 61356  
(815) 659-3282



## Little Bluestem is Perennial of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association's 2022 Perennial Plant of the Year is *Schizachyrium scoparium*, better known (and much more easily pronounced) as Little Bluestem. This tough and hardy (Zone 3) native grass was once one of the dominant grasses on the prairies that covered a large portion of the Midwest. There are several fine cultivars of little bluestem on the market, but the PPA did not name a specific one, leaving it to those of us in the trade to recommend varieties that do well in our location.

Once established, little bluestem does not want to be babied. It is best grown in full sun, and it's not particular about soils, doing fine in dry to medium, well-drained ground. It does not like overly wet conditions. Too much shade, moisture, or fertilizer can make the plant floppy. Cut back in late winter or early spring before the new grass grows up into last year's foliage.



'Standing Ovation'

Our go-to choice for little bluestem is 'Standing Ovation'. We have one hundred of them planted in the median of The Barn's parking lot, where they thrive on neglect while performing great every year. 'Standing Ovation' is so named because it stands nicely erect, growing 3-4' tall. The bluish-green foliage is attractive all season, and then

turns fiery colors of red and purple in late summer and fall.

'Blue Paradise' is another good variety, growing upright and columnar. Its silvery blue foliage grows to a little over 3' and develops a deep wine purple in the fall. By the way, *schizachyrium* is pronounced: skizz-uh-KEER-ee-um.

## WEBSITE REVAMPS

We have been working over the winter with Brent of Jamison Media Services to bring a new look to both the garden center and The Barn websites. We are hoping to launch these new sites soon, so please stay tuned. The new garden center website will be integrated with the point-of-sale system we introduced last year. This will allow us to show you photos and more detailed information for most categories of plants. We know how you love our price lists, but wait until you see the pictures, too. We know you are going to love it!



## 'Island Breeze' is Hosta of the Year



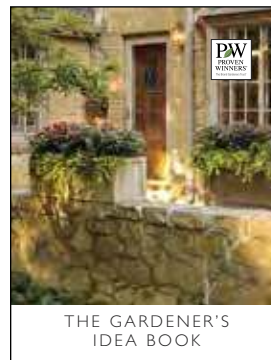
Hosta 'Island Breeze'

First came 'Fire Island', a vivid yellow hosta. Then came its sport (genetic mutation), 'Paradise Island', with its bright yellow foliage with green margins. It then sported to 'Island Breeze', which has been named the 2022 Hosta of the Year by the American Hosta Growers Association.

We love this hosta. It has much thicker leaves, for starters, making it more durable and resistant to slug damage. The somewhat rounded leaves emerge bright gold with a medium green margin in the spring. As summer progresses, the gold becomes a softer yellow if the plant gets some good morning sun. In deeper shade, the yellow will be more chartreuse.

Adding to the stunning foliage show are the red petioles (leaf stems) that are especially noticeable as the plant emerges from the ground in the spring. The red even bleeds onto the base of the leaf just a bit. This gorgeous, medium-sized mound produces dark lavender flowers in late summer. To see it is to want it growing in your garden.

## THE GARDENER'S IDEA BOOK



THE GARDENER'S  
IDEA BOOK



Be sure to check out the Proven Winners website to download your free copy of the 2022 Gardener's Idea Book. You can also request a print copy. [www.provenwinners.com/ideabooks](http://www.provenwinners.com/ideabooks)

# New Trees & Shrubs for 2022

We are thrilled to be offering a lot of new and exciting trees and shrubs this year. As I (Rich here) made a list of some that I particularly want to mention, I noticed that the overwhelming majority of them are dwarf in size. It's great to have some smaller woody ornamentals that fit better into people's yards, whether as foundation plantings, stand-alone specimens, or additions to the mixed perennial/shrub beds.



Syringa x Little Lady

**Shrubs:** We'll start with three new **lilac** dwarf hybrids. **Tiny Dancer™** is a dwarf French hybrid, growing only around 5' tall, with purple buds that open to lavender flower clusters. **Little Lady®** has dark pink buds that open to pink-lilac blooms and grows 5' tall and wide. Both of these would make good foundation plants. The third new variety is **Virtual Violet®**, which is taller than the first two, but still smaller than the usual French hybrids. It has shiny violet spring foliage, deep purple stems and fragrant violet flowers. It grows 6-8' tall and 5-7' wide and makes a great hedge or specimen plants.

I'm always a sucker for yellow foliated plants that glow in the landscape. **Cotinus Winecraft Gold®** is a **smokebush** that has leaves that emerge orange, then turn bright yellow, and finally bright chartreuse for the summer. The typical pink, smoky plumes appear in early summer. It grows 4-6' tall and wide, much smaller than the conventional smokebush.



Hydrangea Little Hottie®

And, of course, we have a couple of new **hydrangeas**, both of which are hardy panicle hydrangeas. **Little Hottie®** is a compact, rounded mound with florets that emerge green, turn sparkling white, and then to soft pink. It grows 3-5' tall and wide. **Quick Fire Fab®** shares the same super-early bloom time, reliability, and easy going nature of the original Quick Fire®, but adds large mophead blooms to the mix. The blooms start pure white and turn pink, then rosy red. The plant grows to 6' tall and wide.

## Flowering trees:

Two new members of the **Redbud** family exhibit small size, great flowers, and interesting, weeping shape. **'Ruby Falls'** has maroon foliage and a weeping form on a cute, little tree that grows 6' tall with a spread of 4'.



Ruby Falls

It has the characteristic, bright lavender spring flowers before the gorgeous foliage emerges. **Vanilla Twist®** is also a weeper, but with white flowers, on a tree that grows to 12' tall.

**Halesia 'Jersey Belle'** (Carolina Silverbell) is an excellent understory tree with bright white, bell-shaped flowers in spring before the foliage emerges. It grows slowly to 25' tall and 20' wide. We have had one growing in our gardens for several years, but have had trouble finding any to sell. Finally got our hands on a couple this year.



Betula Cinnamon Curls®

**Deciduous trees:** The dwarf theme continues with some new trees that we can hardly wait to see. **Betula Cinnamon Curls®** is a single-stemmed, dwarf **Korean Birch** that grows to only 9' tall and wide. It has white, exfoliating bark that curls in strips to expose

cinnamon-colored undersides.

**Cercidiphyllum Claim Jumper®** is a smaller form of Katsura tree, growing 20-30' tall and 15-20' wide. Its stunning foliage emerges gold with a pink flush, then



turns bright yellow-gold for the season.

We finally have a few decent sized plants of **Ginkgo 'Jade Butterflies'** coming in this spring. There is a beautiful, mature specimen growing in our gardens, but it has been a plant that is hard to find in a good size. It is a dwarf, shrubby form of ginkgo with unique, butterfly wing shaped foliage. It generally is described as having bright yellow fall foliage, but our specimen has not done that so far. It is still one of my favorite plants in our sunny gardens because it is so interesting, hardy, and unique.



Ginkgo 'Jade Butterflies'

For all you beech tree fans, we have a plethora of exciting new dwarf trees. **'Tortuosa'** is an enchanting, contorted, **European Beech** with twisted trunk and gnarled stems that weep downward. It grows slowly to 15' tall and up to 20' wide, but will take quite a number of years to get there. In the meantime, it will be a dwarf, umbrella shaped tree of unique beauty in the garden. **'Tortuosa Purpurea'** is the same tree, but with purple foliage.

**'Rohan Weeping'** is a dwarf, weeping, purple beech tree that will grow to 10' tall and 8' wide in 10-15 years. We will only have it in a 3-gallon size, but it will probably grow faster than the contorted varieties mentioned above.

**'Ansoergei'** is a semi-dwarf **European Beech** that is choice and rare. It has radically slender, purple foliage on an open, irregular framework, growing around 13' tall and 15' wide. I just hope we get a couple of these four new trees planted in our gardens before you beech fans grab them for yourselves.

**Conifers:** We have expanded our conifer palette with several new and interesting plants. **'Trautman'** is a **juniper** that makes an excellent vertical accent plant similar in shape to the narrow elegance of the Italian Cypress, but hardy! It has elegant, slender form and blue-green foliage, making for a great focal point. Garden size is 15' tall and only 4' wide.



Pinus b. 'Schoodic'

Several new **pinus** look interesting. **'Schoodic'** is a jack pine with fine textured needles on a plant with a gnarled, sprawling growth habit. It stays low and looks great running on the ground or draped over a wall. **'Umbraculifera Compacta'** is a **Japanese Red Pine** that is better known as a **Tanyosho Pine**. It's a very attractive, slow-growing, small tree that naturally develops a flat-topped, umbrella-like silhouette. It can eventually grow to 12' tall and wide, but, because of its slow growth habit, it will be a small and unique point of interest in your garden for a very long time. And by the time it gets that big, you won't care if it has shaded out some perennials that grew near it because it will be so cool looking. Just plant some hostas under it.

Two new **Japanese White Pines** show promise. **'Fukai'** is a unique conifer with creamy gold banding on new growth. It grows 10' tall and 5' wide. **'Gimborn's Ideal'** will definitely lend a Japanese look to the garden. It is a slow growing, irregular, narrow selection with powdery blue needles, growing 10' tall and 3' wide.

The arrival of trees and shrubs is always one of the most exciting times of year for me. And when there are so many new varieties on board, it is just that much more tantalizing. It won't be long now!



Juniperus ch. 'Trautman'





Hosta 'Dancing with Dragons'



Amsonia 'String Theory'



Dryopteris 'Jurassic Gold'



Hosta 'Snow Cap'

# New Hostas and Perennials

Hostas: Rippled and wavy leaves is the theme of several new hosta varieties this year. **'Dancing with Dragons'** (what a great name!) is a medium blue hosta with heavily rippled margins that holds its color well throughout the season. Its overall wavy presence makes this beauty appear to be dancing in the garden. If you have room for a giant, consider **'Drop-dead Gorgeous'**. Large, ovate green leaves with bright yellow, rippled margins have a lightly wavy overall effect. Grayish streaks appear where the margin and center color overlap. A must-have, showy specimen for the shade! **'Wind Beneath My Wings'**, another giant, is a majestic blue hosta with incredibly large ruffled foliage. A couple of smaller options with deep purple flowers are 'Party Streamers' and 'Time in a Bottle'. **'Party Streamers'** forms a small, fast-growing mound with narrow, wiggly yellow leaves. **'Time in a Bottle'** is a medium with moderately wavy foliage that emerges bright yellow in spring and becomes more chartreuse throughout the summer.



Hosta 'Wind Beneath My Wings'

Several other new hostas may not have wavy edges, but they are standouts in their own right. **'Frozen Margarita'** is a sport of 'Fried Bananas', with the same shiny gold leaves but with an added white margin. Like its parent, it is considered sun tolerant, and will show off its best gold

color with enough light. It's a vigorous grower with fragrant, near white flowers. A cutie for the front of the border. **'Hands Up'** is a fully tetraploid sport of 'Praying Hands'. It's twisted, upright foliage is thick and has more

defined cream margins. A very unique specimen that would perhaps show off best in a container or miniature garden.



Hosta 'Twin Cities'

If you want to add texture to your shade garden, check out these two hostas that boast large, thick, heavily corrugated foliage. **'Twin Cities'** is a reverse sport of 'St. Paul' with blue-green leaves and wide, 2 inch chartreuse margins that mature to gold. Forms a large spreading clump with an upright habit. **'George Smith'** is a rarely seen gold-centered sport of 'Elegans'. It forms a medium to large clump of gold-centered leaves with wide blue-green margins. This attractive mound is topped with near white flowers in early summer.

**'Snow Cap'** forms a medium size mound of heart-shaped, frosty gray-green leaves with wide, irregular cream white margins. The leaves are puckered and lightly cupped when mature. **'Yellow Polka Dot Bikini'** is a small sport of 'Striptease' that emerges with striking, bright yellow margins in spring with dark green centers. Like its parent, there are white streaks between the margins and leaf center. The leaf margins eventually mature to an apple-green, but the spring color is what makes this hosta stand out!

Perennials: As always, there are more new perennials arriving this spring than there is room to boast about





them all here, but we'll highlight several of our favorites. There are two new **Amsonia (Blue Star)** on our list. *Amsonia hubrichtii* was the perennial of the year a decade ago, and since then there have been several new introductions with improved form. **'Butterscotch'** grows 24-36" tall with reddish stems and outstanding fall foliage turning shades of butterscotch and gold. **'String Theory'** is a more compact version, reaching 18-22" tall with dark green foliage turning brilliant golden orange in the fall. Both have light blue clusters of star-shaped flowers in late spring to early summer.

Many of you probably have some form of Bleeding Hearts in your shade garden, but this new introduction, **Dicentra 'Pink Diamonds'** is a bleeding heart for the sun! Pink flowers cover the fine, fern-like blue-green foliage in late spring and throughout the season. Loves full sun and good drainage and reaches 12-16" tall.

**Geranium 'Boom Chocolatta' (Cranesbill)** is a more vigorous dark leafed variety than older genetics. Blue-purple flowers cover the top of the dark purple-bronze foliage throughout the summer. Grows 24-26" tall in full to partial sun. Another dark foliage introduction is **Hibiscus Summerific® 'Edge of Night' (Rose Mallow)**. A compact variety at only 3-3.5 feet tall with 7-8" bubblegum pink flowers with dark pink veining. Jet black foliage is the darkest we've seen on a Hibiscus. The hardy "dinner plate" hibiscus are the queens of the midsummer garden.

**Lavandula Sensational!** is a new lavender introduction from Peace Tree Farm, who also brought us 'Phenomenal', which has become our favorite and best growing lavender in our gardens. Sensational! has beautiful silver foliage and incredibly thick and sturdy flower stems that produce flowers all season. With its extremely good heat and humidity tolerance along with cold tolerance, we expect it to soon be another favorite. More color for the summer garden can be found in **Echinacea Sunny Days™ Lemon** and **Sunny Days™ Ruby**. This series of coneflowers produce an abundance of fragrant, double flowers on strong, compact, upright mounds. These two varieties reach a height of 22-30" and 18-24" respectively. **Phlox p. 'Backlight' (Tall Garden Phlox)**, produces pure white flowers atop a perfect habit that stands 30-32" tall. The dark green foliage has excellent mildew resistance throughout our hot, humid summers.

For some late season color, check out any of our **Sedum (Stonecrop). 'Back in Black'** has beautiful dark purple foliage you can enjoy all season, and then blooms late summer into fall showcasing cream flowers with deep garnet red centers. **'Coraljade'** has rich green foliage with citron green buds that open to soft coral



pink. It grows 16-18” and holds his dome-shaped habit well. More late season interest is provided by ‘**Pennisetum ‘Lemon Squeeze’**, a Fountain Grass with chartreuse gold leaves. It reaches a nice mid-range size of 3-3.5 feet. Copper panicles appear above the foliage in midsummer providing additional interest.

As for new perennials for the shade garden, let’s start with **Heuchera ‘Evening Gown’ (Coral Bells)**. Huge, glossy black foliage with very ruffled margins forms a mound 12-14” tall and 20-24” wide. Best color and performance in partial shade. **Ligularia ‘Pandora’ (Ragwort)** has a unique dwarf habit reaching only 12-14” tall. Nicely textured, glossy leaves emerge wine red to chocolate brown and mature to deep olive green. Golden daisy-like flowers on thick red stems appear in summer. **Athyrium ‘Crested Surf’** looks similar in color to a traditional Japanese Painted Fern, but the tips of the fronds are double crested. **Dryopteris ‘Jurassic Gold’** emerges in spring with orange fronds, which fade to golden yellow and eventually turn green. Ferns are perfect for moist, shady areas.

When you visit us this spring, be sure to keep an eye out for the “New at Hornbaker Gardens” flags, marking all our new varieties for this season.



## OPENING DAY IS SUNDAY, APRIL 10 AT NOON!

**HOURS:** Through July 10, we will be open Monday through Saturday, 8 am to 5 pm, and Sunday Noon to 5 pm.

We will be closed Easter Sunday, April 17. From July 11 through October 10, we will be open Monday through Saturday, 8 am to 5 pm, and we will be closed on Sundays.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
TO SIGN UP.

# Calendar of Events

Bring a lawn chair and  
dress for the weather.

Saturday workshops  
are free to observe.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 23 AT 10 AM**

**New Plants for 2022:** Join us in the garden center to learn about some exciting new plant varieties including hostas, perennials, trees and shrubs. Molly will share some growing tips and specifics of where you can utilize these beauties in your own space. Free.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 30 AT 10 AM**

**Gardening with Perennials:** As we start our 36th year in business, we'll talk about our "Tested Hardy at Hornbaker Gardens" feature, along with general tips on growing and cutting back perennials. We'll demonstrate how to divide a variety of perennials, including hostas, of course. Free.

**SATURDAY, MAY 7 AT 10 AM**

**Kids' Containers for Mother's Day:** Here's a chance for the kids to come get their hands dirty and create something pretty for Mother's Day. We will have small pots and plant stakes for kids to decorate. They can then plant a flower, succulent or houseplant and have a complete, unique gift to take home. Fee: \$15

**SATURDAY, MAY 14 AT 10 AM**

**Spring Container:** We will prepare some recipes of colorful combinations as examples, taking the guesswork out of deciding which plants work well together. Included will be a 12-inch container, potting soil, fertilizer, plants and step by step instructions. Reservations required. \$40

**SATURDAY, MAY 21 AT 10 AM**

**Terrarium "Make & Take" Workshop:**

While we assist participants in building their own glass terrarium, we will outline the basics of design, planting and care. We have various sizes of vessels to choose from, and all materials and plants are included. Fee depends on the container you choose. Reservations required. Fee: \$25-\$60

**SATURDAY, MAY 28 AT 10 AM**

**Macramé Plant Hanger Workshop:** This popular way to display houseplants is simple to make. Participants will be instructed how to tie their way to a new house plant hanger. We will have a large selection of houseplants that can be purchased, or bring along one you already own. Fee: \$10

**SATURDAY, JUNE 4 AT 10 AM**

**Kids' Dragon/Fairy Garden "Make & Take" Workshop:** If your littles love dragons or fairies or both, they'll have fun creating a succulent habitat for their creatures. We will assist with planting and also have supplies for them to decorate a small dragon cave to accessorize their container. Fee: \$20

**FRIDAY, JUNE 10 THRU SUNDAY, JUNE 12**

**35th Annual Open House and Hosta Walk**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 5-7 P.M.**

**Friday Night Sip and Stroll:** Food, beer & wine in the gardens!

**SATURDAY, JUNE 11 AT 10 AM**

**Plant Anatomy Workshop:** Join our staff member Carol as she gives an introduction to plant biology. Learn the anatomy of a plant in a hands on dissection and see how all plants have the same basic parts that come together to create each unique plant.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 11 AT 1 PM**

**Hypertufa "Make & Take" Workshop:**

Peoria-area horticulturist Ella Maxwell will be here to help you create a rustic garden container for your patio, deck, or garden. We will have the materials on hand for you to make a small planter using a mixture of materials called hypertufa, which looks like stone after it cures. Please wear old clothes and shoes. Reservations are required. Fee: \$20.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 12 AT 2 PM**

**Arboretum Walk:** The Hornbakers have been planting trees and shrubs on their 40 acres for over 40 years. Join Rich and Dave for an afternoon stroll around the grounds. Several varieties of Beech trees will be featured, along with many other unusual and standard plants, including conifers. Free.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 25 AT 10 AM**

**Pollination Workshop:** Come celebrate National Pollinator Week with us. Staff member Carol will be hosting an open discussion about all things pollinators. Learn about native plants that provide food to these beneficial insects and what you can do in your gardens to welcome and support butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. Free.

**SUNDAY, JULY 24TH: Solberg Hosta Event**

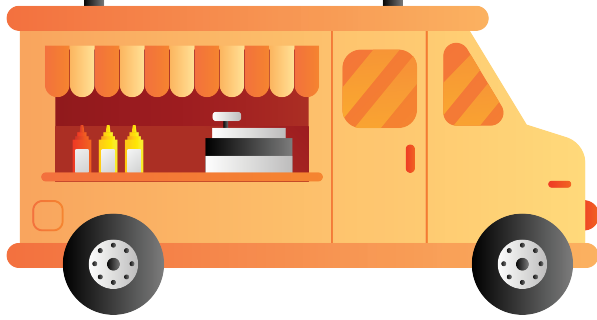
Nationally known hosta expert Bob Solberg will be back to share his humor and wisdom. Details to come!

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

**9th annual Artisan Market.** 10 am to 4 pm



## FOOD TRUCK



Food trucks are back this year! We are working on hosting a lunch truck at the gardens on Saturdays beginning May 7 through our Open House on June 11th. Stay tuned for the details.

## YOGA IN THE GARDENS

May 7, 14, and 21 from 8:30 to 9:30 am



Certified yoga instructors from Arukah Institute of Healing will lead a basic yoga flow in the peaceful backdrop of our gardens. No experience necessary. Please bring a mat if possible, a limited number will be provided. Donations to Arukah are encouraged.

## Coming Soon!

HORNBAKER  
GARDENS



We are excited to announce the Hornbaker Gardens Nature Rangers series of activities for kids in June and July. Stay tuned for more details in our next newsletter.

## Evenings on the Patio

*Back by popular demand, our evening on the patio series at our event center, The Barn. Enjoy the fresh air and peaceful surroundings, and a complimentary beer or wine. Plan a date night, a girl's night out, or come on your own.*

**SPRING CONTAINER:** May has arrived and it's time to pot up a beautiful container for your porch or patio. We'll supply a 12 inch container, potting soil, fertilizer, plants and step by step instructions. You sip and mingle while playing in the dirt. Reservations are required. Fee: \$40

**CULTIVATING AND COOKING HERBS:** Join local chef Monika Sudakov, from the Chestnut Street Inn in Sheffield, to learn about tips for growing and using fresh herbs. After learning the basics, watch Chef Monika make a simple dish using fresh herbs to sample. Everyone goes home with an herb plant to add to their garden. Reservations required. Fee: \$15

**SENSATIONAL SUCCULENTS:** In this hands-on workshop, you'll be creating your own mini succulent garden. David Hornbaker will provide expert guidance and a variety of unique upcycled containers for you to choose from, along with some more traditional containers. Reservations required. Fee: \$35.

**MASON JAR FLOWER ARRANGING "MAKE & TAKE" WORKSHOP:** Lindsay Funderberg is the manager of The Barn here at the Gardens and an incredible florist. Lindsay will be offering tips and guidance as you use foliage and flowers from our gardens to create your own arrangement in a mason jar. Reservations required. Fee: \$15