

The American GARDENER[®]

The Magazine of the American Horticultural Society

May / June 2009

Water-Thrifty
Rockroses

Versatile Sedges for
American Gardens

Betsy Clebsch:
First Lady of Salvias

choosing the right
Garden Bench

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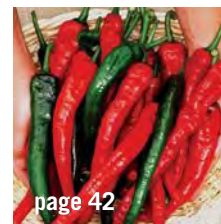
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*In memoriam

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NOTES FROM RIVER FARM

AT OUR RIVER FARM headquarters, the onset of spring has been marked by the usual floral choreography—from clouds of cherry and pear blossoms, to vibrant sweeps of colorful daffodils and tulips, and, most recently, the delicate blooms of native redbuds and dogwoods at the edge of the woods. In very short order, our magnificent Osage orange tree will once again be leafed out, providing welcome shade from the sun. It is already a common sight to see groups of visitors making the trek down through the André Bluemel Meadow to the bank of the Potomac River. Before long, school will be out and we will be hearing screams of delight from youngsters exploring the Children's Garden and participating in our summer education programs.

This is the time of year when thoughts turn to vacations, travel, and—of course—visiting gardens. Whether you are looking for new plant combinations, seeking inspiration for that new garden area you have in mind, or are just interested in ways to be a better gardener, visiting public gardens is a great way to get fresh ideas. As you begin planning summer excursions, remember to take advantage of the Reciprocal Admissions benefit you receive as a member of the American Horticultural Society. With a record number of gardens now participating in this program, your AHS membership card can be a passport to more than 200 gardens across North America. You can find the listing of participating gardens in the Member Guide that was included in the January/February issue of *The American Gardener*, or visit www.ahs.org for the latest update. And, if your summer travels bring you to our nation's capital, be sure to allow time for a visit to River Farm.

Whatever your plans for the coming months may be, we hope that this issue of *The American Gardener* is the ticket to more enjoyment and success in your garden. If you are interested in adding seating to your garden so you can savor the fruits of your labors, you'll appreciate the article on how to select and place garden benches. Profiles of sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rockroses (*Cistus* and *Halimium* spp.) offer insight into two plant groups suited to totally opposite garden environments. And if fresh salsa sounds appealing, look for some pointers on choosing and growing good salsa peppers in the "Homegrown Harvest" department. Recognizing that gardening is as much about people as it is plants, this issue also features a profile of Betsy Clebsch, a California gardener who is one of the leading experts on the genus *Salvia*.

We'd like to know where your garden travels take you this spring and summer. If you e-mail your favorite destination to us at membership@ahs.org, along with your name, we'll enter you into a drawing for a two-volume set of *Gardens Across America: The American Horticultural Society's Guide to American Public Gardens and Arboreta*. We'll report back on some of our own travels in the next issue.

In the meantime, happy gardening!

Susie Usrey, Chair, AHS Board of Directors
Tom Underwood, Executive Director



MEMBERS' FORUM

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE APPEALS

I wanted to share with you some of the reasons why I enjoy being an AHS member and reading *The American Gardener*.

Although I receive magazines that are more focused on gardening in California, where I live, I have very diverse interests. It gets cold enough here (temperatures in the mid-20s occasionally in the winter) that we get a spring of sorts, with blooming fruit and ornamental trees. At the same time, it is warm enough that I can grow subtropicals and tropicals such as palms, bougainvillea, etc. I have a greenhouse into which I can move really tender things like *Plumeria* for the winter. Our family also has a small cabin in Idyllwild, up 5,000 feet in the mountains, where we get real winter with lots of lilacs in the spring.

In short, I can grow most of what you report on in the magazine. I also do some fruit and vegetable gardening, so I like the way you focus not just on ornamentals but on edible plants. And as I move slowly toward retirement, I have more time to develop even more variety in what I grow. For instance, I kept a copy of an article on arums you published a few issues ago, and I am going to order some of the more exotic ones when I have a little more time.

I have never had the right schedule to be active with local gardening groups, so you also keep me up to date on gardening research, new plant cultivars, and other important information.

Jesse Thomas
Murrieta, California

Member Services

We love to hear from our members! If you have questions about your American Horticultural Society membership, would like to become a member, renew your membership, give a gift of membership, or update your mailing or e-mail address with the AHS, please call (800) 777-7931 ext. 119 or e-mail us at membership@ahs.org.



Symphyotrichum novae-angliae

ASTER UH-OH

I'm sure I am not the first reader of your January/February 2009 edition to point out the nomenclature error in the photograph caption at the bottom of page 22 (ironically in an article on changes to plant nomenclature). The revised botanical name for the New England aster is actually *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*.

David Clark
Sevenoaks, Kent, England

SUSTAINABILITY OF PEAT MOSS HARVESTING

I read your article on potting soils and mixes in the March/April 2009 issue and appreciated your discussion relating to the issue of peat moss.

For future reference, please consider that the research shows the sphagnum moss—as well as other bog vegetation—is well established within five years of restoration after harvest, and not, as the article stated, that “peat moss often starts to re-grow within five years.”

Also it is the rate of accumulation of the dead sphagnum and other bog vegetation that is slow, rather than the growth of the living ecotone. Often the distinction between the living ecotone that contains the sphagnum peat plants and other plant life and the dead and decaying peat biomass of the bog is misunderstood.

I would also like to comment on the reference in the article to whether harvested sites are left to return to their nat-

ural state or converted to alternative uses such as farmland, other wetland types, or forests. This is often a decision made by the regulating body and not by the peat harvesting company. The industry is guided by these decisions, which are made not only for ecological reasons, but for social as well as economic values.

Paul Short
President

Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association
Alberta, Canada

FOAMFLOWER FAUX PAS

In the article on Charles and Martha Oliver in the March/April 2009 issue, there's a small caption error on page 28 that might frustrate readers trying to locate the pictured plant at nurseries. The correct name for the *Tiarella* selection shown in the photograph is 'Pink Brushes'. The name



Tiarella 'Pink Brushes'

seems apt for such a cute foamflower, but Charles Oliver is a bit apologetic about taking credit for it. In an interview I had with him, he told me: “‘Pink Brushes’ got a temporary working name that never got replaced by anything better.”

Bill Scheick
Austin, Texas

PLEASE WRITE US! Address letters to Editor, *The American Gardener*, 7931 East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria, VA 22308. Send e-mails to editor@ahs.org (note Letter to Editor in subject line). Letters we print may be edited for length and clarity.

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FEATURED SPEAKERS include: **Marcy Damon**, grassroots restoration coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, **Jeff Lowenfels**, soil health expert and author of *Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web*, **Douglas Tallamy**, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, and **Paul Tukey**, author of *The Organic Lawn Care Manual*.



Marcy Damon



Jeff Lowenfels



Douglas Tallamy



Paul Tukey

REGISTER TODAY! Visit the American Horticultural Society website (www.ahs.org) or call (703) 768-5700 ext. 132. Registration is \$75 for current AHS members and City of Alexandria residents; \$95 for non-members and non-residents. The Lee Center is located at 1108 Jefferson Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

Green Garage® Gets Green Roof

THE PERMANENT Green Garage® exhibit at River Farm has acquired a new “green roof” that provides insulation, extends the life of the roof, and more importantly, looks beautiful while it conserves water. The roof was installed and planted by the **Furbish Company**, an AHS Corporate Member with headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland.



Furbish also donated the plants for the green roof—a mixture of hardy succulents, primarily sedums, that come pre-planted in specially designed trays. Low-growing sedums are useful as green roof plants because they have a shallow root system, withstand extremes of temperature, absorb water rapidly, and are drought tolerant. Some varieties also flower for long periods, adding interest



Left: Jimmy Dick of Furbish Company, left, River Farm Horticulturist James Gagliardi, center, and AHS Rental and Facilities Coordinator Daniel Scott, right, install plant trays on the roof of the Green Garage. Above: The completed roof about a month later.

to the appearance of the roof. The plants will retain about 70 percent of the rain that falls on the roof, and the remaining rainwater will drain off slowly, reducing the potential damage storm water causes through erosion and carrying pollutants into water systems. This new element of the AHS's Green Garage enhances the exhibit's goal of displaying environmentally friendly ways to garden—not to mention that the plants are an aesthetically pleasing addition to the look of the building.

New Signs for the André Bluemel Meadow at River Farm

THANKS TO A grant from the Fairfax County Neighborhood Enhancement Partnership Program and the hard work of local volunteers, the AHS has created and installed interpretive signs in the André Bluemel Meadow at River Farm.

Forming educational stations throughout the meadow, the signs teach visitors about sustainable gardening practices and environmental stewardship, enhancing the exploration and enjoyment of the four-acre natural habitat garden and the wildlife that it is attracting. The signs themselves, constructed of durable, high quality recycled materials, are philosophically in keeping with the earth-friendly messages they carry.



The meadow preserves a local green space for the community to enjoy, and the new signs add to its educational value by encouraging a better awareness and understanding of the local ecosystem. “Volunteers who live in Fairfax County have been involved with the planting of the meadow for years,” says River Farm Manager **Trish Gibson**, “so these new signs are one more way in which River Farm is connecting the local community—and visitors from around the country—with the natural world around them.”

Visitors to River Farm pause to read one of the new educational signs for the André Bluemel meadow.

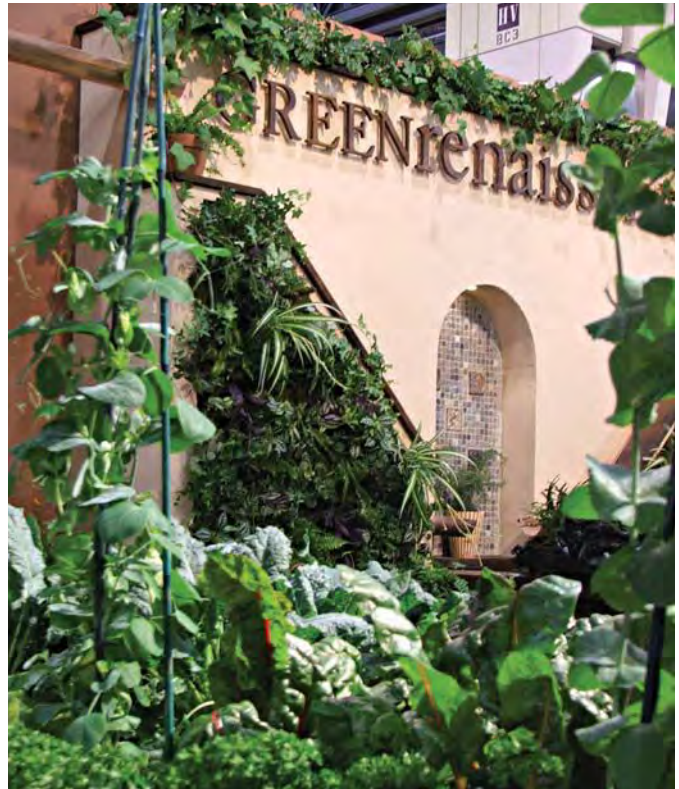
AHS Environmental Awards

THIS SPRING, more than 30 flower shows from all over the United States hosted exhibits that won the AHS's Environmental Award for demonstrating the connection between horticulture and the environment.

At the 2009 Philadelphia Flower Show, the AHS award was presented to Temple University Ambler's "Green Renaissance" exhibit, which incorporated environmentally friendly and sustainable ideas into a traditional 16th-century Italian formal garden. The exhibit was organized into three distinct parts—the kitchen garden, the dry garden, and the orchard—that would have been found in Italian Renaissance gardens. Each part used recycled materials, as well as elements such as aqueducts and porous pavement, to conserve water.

Other 2009 AHS award recipients included "Exteriors" by Chad Robert at the Southwest Flower and Garden Show in Glendale, Arizona; "Rock Solid Conifers" by Rod Juntunen, Wells Nursery, and Marenakos Rock Center at the Northwest Flower & Garden Show in Seattle, Washington; and "Passions for Pollinators" by Callaway Gardens at the Southeastern Flower Show in Atlanta, Georgia.

Through original and imaginative use of plants and other materials, all of the garden exhibits that were recognized by the AHS award helped to promote a better understanding of the important relationship between gardening and environmental sustainability.



At the 2009 Philadelphia Flower Show, Temple University Ambler's "Green Renaissance" exhibit won the AHS Environmental Award.

JAMES F. DUFFY / COURTESY OF TEMPLE UNIVERSITY AMBLER

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HOMESTEAD
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New Youth Programs Intern

THIS SUMMER, a new intern will join the Education Department of the AHS through a special grant funded by the **Exxon-Mobil Community Summer Jobs Program (CSJP)**, which offers opportunities for college students to intern with different nonprofit organizations. The CSJP also includes a training course about careers in the nonprofit sector and a community service project, but the main purpose of the program is to introduce students to the possibilities of nonprofit careers through hands-on experiences with a particular organization.

Lara Hamsher, a student at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, will assist the AHS in developing and managing local and national youth programs, particularly the 17th National Children & Youth Garden Symposium in Cleveland, Ohio (see page 14). "Having experience as the youth programs intern will further my understanding of children in relation to the environment," says Hamsher, "and provide me with the priceless opportunity of engaging children in the amazing world of horticulture."

Through its national educational programs, the AHS introduces children to the joy of gardening, encourages connections to the natural world, and teaches eco-friendly gardening practices.

Upcoming Webinars

ON MAY 5, **Norm Lownds**, curator of the 4-H Children's Garden at Michigan State University, presented an online seminar on "A Little Garden Magic: Connecting Kids to Plants," that explored fun ways to get children excited about plants. A recording of the event, which was offered exclusively for AHS members, will be available in the members-only area of the AHS website.

The next webinar will feature **Scott Calhoun**, garden designer and author, speaking about "Dry Beauty: Strategies for Designing Water-Thrifty Gardens." *Please note: the date of this webinar has changed to July 30 from the previously announced date.* Registration will open on July 1 in the members-only area of the website. There is no fee to participate, but space is limited so be sure to register early. A high-speed Internet connection is strongly recommended for best results from the webinars.



Scott Calhoun

AHS Gala in September

If you haven't already secured your tickets for this year's annual AHS gala, "Celebrating the Elegance of Simplicity," set for September 19 at River Farm, do so soon because tickets are expected to sell out by midsummer. This year's honorary chair, Chef Cathal Armstrong, is creating a special menu for the gala. There will also be a silent auction and dancing. For tickets and additional information, e-mail ccapstack@ahs.org or call (703) 768-5700 ext. 118.



AHS NATIONAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

2009 CALENDAR

Mark your calendar for these national events that are sponsored or co-sponsored by the AHS. Visit www.ahs.org or call (703) 768-5700 for more information.

- JUNE 4. **Great American Gardeners Awards Ceremony and Banquet.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.
- JUNE 14. **Community Green.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.
- JUNE 27. **Green Garage®: Sustainable and Earth-Friendly Solutions for the Landscape.** AHS Garden School. Lee Center, Alexandria, Virginia.
- JULY 23–25. **National Children & Youth Garden Symposium.** Hosted by Cleveland Botanical Garden. Cleveland, Ohio.



- JULY 30. "Dry Beauty: Strategies for Designing Water-Thrifty Gardens." Webinar presented by Scott Calhoun.
- AUG. 21–23. **The Homestead's 11th Annual "In the Garden With the Experts" Symposium.** Hot Springs, Virginia.
- SEPT. 9. "Gardening for Wildlife." Webinar presented by Douglas Tallamy.
- SEPT. 19. **AHS Annual Gala.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.
- OCT. 1–3. **America In Bloom Symposium and Awards Ceremony.** Hershey, Pennsylvania.
- OCT. 23. **Dr. H. Marc Cathey Day.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.
- DEC. 1–24. **Holiday Trees Display.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.
- DEC. 10. **Annual Holiday Reception.** River Farm, Alexandria, Virginia.



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with AHS host *Harry Risetto*

Tour escorted by *Diana Biras*

June 9–14, 2009

■ With summer in full glory, this tour will take you to some of Maryland's finest private and public gardens, including Ladew Topiary Gardens and gardens designed by Wolfgang Oehme of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates. We will also visit Kurt Bluemel, one of America's greatest plantsmen who has been instrumental in broadening the palette of perennials and ornamental grasses. Kurt will give us a private tour of both his nursery and private garden.

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS TODAY!



The Great Bowl, Ladew Topiary Gardens, Monkton, Maryland



Tara Wang / Courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

Manitoga, Garrison, New York

Gardens and Art of the Historic Hudson Highlands

with AHS host *Katy Moss Warner*

Tour escorted by *Stephanie Jutila*

October 14–18, 2009

■ Amid fiery autumn color, come discover the rich horticultural treasures of New York's Hudson River Valley and the art that complements the landscape. Highlights of this tour include Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Springwood estate; Olana, the estate of famed Hudson River School artist Frederic Edwin Church; Lisburne Grange, an estate designed by renowned landscape architect Fletcher Steele; and Manitoga, the modernist home and woodland quarry garden of industrial designer, Russel Wright.

AHS PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL EXCLUSIVE

Portland, Oregon with AHS host *Tom Underwood*

August 12–16, 2009

For AHS President's Council members only! Explore the Portland area's lush public gardens including: The Oregon Garden, the International Rose Test Garden, and the Portland Classical Chinese Garden, along with exquisite private gardens—including AHS Board Chair Susie Usrey's personal garden.

For more information about the President's Council, contact *Stephanie Perez* at (703) 768-5700 ext. 127.

For more information about the AHS Travel Study Program,
visit www.ahs.org
or call (703) 768-5700 ext. 132.

Gifts of Note

In addition to vital support through membership dues, the American Horticultural Society relies on grants, bequests, and other gifts to support its programs. We would like to thank the following donors for gifts received between February 1, 2009 and March 31, 2009.

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If you would like to support the American Horticultural Society as part of your estate planning, as a tribute to a loved one, or as part of your annual commitment to charitable giving, please contact: Stephanie Perez, (703) 768-5700 ext. 127 or sperez@ahs.org.

Springtime Blues at River Farm



Among the many bulbs blooming at River Farm this spring were unusual Chilean blue crocuses (*Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* var. *leichtlinii*), above, and grape hyacinths (*Muscari aucheri* 'Blue Magic'), left, growing in containers. The bulbs were donated by AHS Corporate Member Brent and Becky's Bulbs of Gloucester, Virginia.

AHS Garden School Focuses on Sustainable Landscaping Know-How

REGISTRATION IS NOW open for the AHS's newest Garden School, "Green Garage®: Sustainable and Earth-Friendly Solutions for the Landscape," co-sponsored by the City of Alexandria. Taking place at the Lee Center in Alexandria, Virginia, on June 27, this program will offer a wealth of environmentally sustainable practices for gardens, landscapes, and other green spaces that you can apply at work, at home, or in your community. Featured speakers include:



Marcy Damon



Douglas Tallamy

Marcy Damon, grassroots restoration coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; **Jeff Lowenfels**, author of *Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web*; **Douglas Tallamy**, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*; and **Paul Tukey**, author of *The Organic Lawn Care Manual*. Discounted registration is available for AHS members and City of Alexandria residents. For more details, call (703) 768-5700 ext. 132 or e-mail education@ahs.org.

Community Green Highlights

THE UPCOMING Community Green at the AHS's River Farm on June 14 will offer lectures, demonstrations, and exhibits to share the newest plants, products, and techniques to "go green"



in your home and garden. It will feature guest speakers and exhibitors including **Brent Heath** of Brent & Becky's Bulbs, wildlife photographer **Don Chernoff** of DC Wild, and **Joe Keyser** of the GreenMan radio show. Another highlight of Community Green will be **The Johnny Artis Band**, a group that has built a reputation in the mid-Atlantic region for engaging stage presence and entertainment, performing from 3 to 6 p.m. Sponsors for this new event include the **Furbish Company**, **Keaney Produce Company**, **Monrovia**, and **Renee's Garden Seeds**. For more information about Community Green and directions to River Farm, visit www.ahs.org and click on "River Farm," or call (703) 768-5700.

News written by Editorial Intern Talia Goldman.

Common Ground: Gardens for a Greener Tomorrow



The American Horticultural Society's
17th Annual

National Children & Youth Garden Symposium

July 23–25, 2009 • Cleveland, Ohio
Hosted by Cleveland Botanical Garden

For more information, visit www.ahs.org or call (703) 768-5700 ext. 137.



2009 AHS NATIONAL CHILDREN & YOUTH GARDEN SYMPOSIUM

Finding Common Ground in Cleveland for a Greener Tomorrow

by Melissa Hebert



IN AN INCREASINGLY diverse world, gardens offer a place to find common ground, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or other differences. Along with providing opportunities to celebrate diversity, gardens also can teach children and young adults a host of valuable life lessons—something Cleveland Botanical Garden in Ohio has been proving for more than a decade.

Cleveland Botanical Garden's success and experience in this arena make it an ideal host for the American Horticultural Society's 17th annual National Children & Youth Garden Symposium, taking place from July 23 to 25. During this event, teachers, public garden administrators, garden designers, and others who work with youth will get an inside look at the Garden's programs for young people and its highly acclaimed Hershey Children's Garden, which is celebrating its 10th an-

Cleveland Botanical Garden engages kids of all ages through its Hershey Children's Garden, top, and its Green Corps Urban Youth Program, right.

niversary this year. "From the first introduction to plants that children get through our Hershey Children's Garden to the urban agriculture practiced by teenagers in our Green Corps Learning Gardens," says **Natalie Ronayne**, Cleveland Botanical



Garden's executive director, "we are deeply invested in the ways young people learn from gardens and the way gardens bring youth, and all of us, together."

With the theme, "Common Ground: Gardens for a Greener Tomorrow," the 2009 Symposium's focus is on finding ways to use gardens to cultivate everything from healthier food to an understanding of diversity in all its forms and a respect for the environment. The Symposium will be jam-packed with opportunities to observe and learn during workshops, lectures, tours, poster sessions, and more.

GARDENING WITH A SIDE OF LIFE SKILLS

One centerpiece of the Symposium will be Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps Urban Youth Program. Founded in 1996, this program hires high school students to "transform vacant lots into flourishing urban farms." The students grow a variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers in one of five Learning Gardens located throughout Cleveland. They also sell the harvested produce at local markets or



Youth participating in Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps Program learn to grow produce, left, and sell it at market, above.

make it into a Green Corps trademarked line of salsas and salad dressings.

For anyone who doubts such a program could make much difference in the lives of teenagers, just ask 17-year-old **Courtney McRae**, one of 75 teens participating in Green Corps. Now in her second year as a student employee at the Slavic Village Learning Garden, she reaps much more than flowers and vegetables from her training. Coming of age in an instant-message, high-speed-Internet world, McRae's gardening experience has taught her patience and the reward of seeing hard work pay off.

"It's not just dumping seeds in the ground," says McRae, who, as a young child, helped in her grandmother's garden. "I've learned about germination, making planting beds, composting, and the right way to plant seeds."

Green Corps serves several purposes, explains the program's Director **Bob Shields**. The most obvious is putting gardens and gardening in an urban context, but everything that goes on at the gardens is a learning opportunity—the science of growing plants, sustainability, working together, where food comes from, the importance of healthy eating,

and interacting with the public while selling the program's products.

"Students learn how to be in a work environment," says Shields. "They get exposed to communities outside of their own, and learn to deal with them, by working at the markets every week. They're developing skills that make them productive, happy adults."

The Symposium will include a tour of all five Green Corps Learning Gardens, since each has a style all its own. "The

participants will see first-hand how the program works and meet students to hear what Green Corps means to them," says Shields.

A PLACE TO PLAY AND LEARN

Another highlight of the Symposium will be Cleveland Botanical Garden's Hershey Children's Garden, which opened in 1999. The first public children's garden in Ohio, this half-acre paradise is constructed with scaled-down versions of tools, buildings, gates, and paths. While parents and adults are welcome, the garden clearly belongs to the children.

The garden's primary objective is to encourage children to learn about gardening and nature while having fun at the same time. Children learn about the origins of food by watering and harvesting fruits, vegetables, herbs, and berries from growing plants. Compost bins and the Scrounger's Garden teach environmental concepts through hands-on participation. The greenhouse, worm bins, maze, water features, containers, and sculptures all help engage children in a wonderland of flowers and greenery. (For more information about Hershey Children's Garden, see the sidebar on page 16.)

Symposium Registration

More details and registration for the 2009 AHS National Children & Youth Garden Symposium are available on the AHS website (www.ahs.org) or by calling (703) 768-5700 ext. 132.

Extending the Experience

Cleveland-based artist Melinda Placko will lead a pre-Symposium workshop, "Enliven a Space with Environmental Art," on July 22 at Cleveland Botanical Garden. In this hands-on workshop, participants will create a variety of natural installations using ephemeral materials, including small and large scale, individual, and collaborative pieces.

After the Symposium concludes on July 25, participants have the opportunity to visit a Cleveland icon—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on the shores of Lake Erie. This will be followed by dinner at the Great Lakes Brewing Company, an environmentally and socially conscious brewer of award-winning beer made from all-natural ingredients. Those interested in participating in these extra activities must sign up when registering for the Symposium (see registration information above).

HERSHEY CHILDREN'S GARDEN CELEBRATES A DECADE

In 1997, Cleveland Botanical Garden began planning a garden specifically for children—the first garden of its kind in Ohio. Two years later, Hershey Children's Garden opened its gates to welcome children of all ages.

Maureen Heffernan, now the executive director of Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine, was director of public programs for Cleveland Botanical Garden when Hershey Children's Garden was created. She was part of the leadership team that coordinated the project.

Rather than a passive garden loaded with gimmicky exhibits and lots of bright plastic, the goal was to have a natural space where kids would be inspired by nature to play and learn, instead of just stand and look.

"We wanted kids to lie on their stomachs on the floating dock and look for goldfish," Heffernan says. "We wanted kids to touch the plants and water them, go through the maze, sit on the bronze pony."

Working closely together, the design team of landscape architect Herb Schall of EDAW, Inc., Cleveland Botanical Garden Board member and volunteer Debra Hershey Guren, and Heffernan came up



with a design that incorporated both nature and horticulture in ways that would appeal to children. It begins at the entrance, with a whimsical wrought iron gate decorated with butterflies and other insects.

Everything was designed in a child's scale. The sun fountain comes up at ground level. Four boulders, which intermittently provide a misting spray, represent the four winds. The wheelchair-accessible treehouse allows all kids to indulge their inner Swiss Family Robinson. Old stumps encircle a sandbox popular with small kids.



Hershey Children's Garden features a treehouse, above, and a pond, left, where kids can get up close to nature.

Another goal of the garden was to inspire families with ideas they could recreate in their own yards. For example, in the Scroungers' Garden, everything from purses to file cabinets serves as planting containers, and hand pumps located nearby allow kids to help water the plants.

"Thanks to the original team's vision," says Joshua Steffen, the current manager of Hershey Children's Garden, "we have a garden offering plenty of teachable moments, nooks and crannies to explore, and a home for the hustle and bustle of kids learning. There's always something going on, and activities like Mud Pie Mondays, storytelling, or cider-pressing in the fall have become our traditions."

—Melissa Hebert

GROWING HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In addition to Cleveland Botanical Garden's programs and gardens, a keynote presentation by **Will Allen** will provide further insight into connecting kids with plants and communities. During "Growing Food in the Heart of the City," Allen will share his experiences with empowering inner-city youth to make a difference in their communities through producing healthy food.

Named a 2008 MacArthur Genius Fellow, Allen is the chief executive officer of Growing Power, Inc. Since its inception in 1993 as an effort to involve teens in growing their own produce in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Growing Power has become a national organization that develops community food systems to provide "high-quality, safe, healthy, affordable food for all residents in the community."



Growing Power founder Will Allen, left, teaches urban kids at Milwaukee's only remaining farm.



Will Allen demonstrates to a group of children and adults that the foundation of growing healthy food is good soil.

On two acres of inner-city land, Growing Power operates the last remaining farm in Milwaukee. Teens help to raise a variety of livestock and grow hydroponic vegetables using water from a tank where they raise fish. Over the years, Growing Power has expanded its land from the original two acres to include a 40-acre plot just

outside of Milwaukee, as well as other urban gardens. Growing Power sells its produce not only to the public at its Milwaukee location, but also to food co-ops and restaurants in both Milwaukee and Chicago. And it will soon be developing training centers in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Massachusetts.

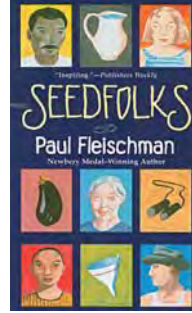
OTHER SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

Participants also can look forward to a variety of other offerings. There will be more than 30 educational sessions to choose from, presented by speakers from across the country. Topics range from strategies for reaching diverse audiences to designing and funding children's gardens to developing meaningful plant-based programs and lessons. Supplementing these lectures and workshops, posters by organizations, schools, and others will be on display throughout the event.

For the Symposium's conclusion, Cleveland-area young people will put on a theatrical production of *Seedfolks* by New-

bery Medal-winning writer **Paul Fleischman**. *Seedfolks* is the story of how an impromptu community garden brought the people of a diverse Cleveland neighborhood together on common ground.

Finally, some of the most valuable resources at the Symposium are its participants. "Many of them are individuals who have had a significant influence in the children's gardening movement," notes AHS Education Programs Manager **Stephanie Jutila**. "Their efforts reach thousands of children and youth across the country, making lasting differences in their lives and their communities. The Symposium's purpose is to expand upon this important work by building networks, sparking new ideas, and getting everyone together to dream up innovative and exciting ways to give the next generation a solid connection to plants, gardens, and nature."



Melissa Hebert is a freelance writer who lives in Avon Lake, Ohio.



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Carex for American Gardens

WHETHER GARDENERS know it or not, the genus *Carex* represents one of the taxonomic juggernauts of the plant world. No other genus attracts a greater union of garden-plant geeks, habitat-restoration nerds, and nursery-production dweebs. I have known botanists to go weak in the knees in the presence of a little sprig of green that most people would pass up as an insignificant speck, albeit a very rare and special speck! I've likewise known eloquent gardeners to rhapsodize endlessly about their newly acquired variegated curly-top sedge. And when it comes to nursery growers, flats full of germinating *Carex* seed can result in oohs and ahhs that make their non-plant-geek spouses roll their eyes.

From gracefully weeping to upright and angular, these noteworthy selections of grasslike ornamentals offer a wide range of garden choices.

BY PAUL CAPPIELLO

SORTING OUT FAMILY CONNECTIONS

So what makes a sedge a sedge, and a *Carex* a *Carex*? First things first. The common name, sedge, represents a vast group of plants, all members of the sedge

family (Cyperaceae), including the genera *Carex*, *Cyperus*, and others.

There are somewhere between one and two thousand *Carex* species—depending on which taxonomist you ask—that grace habitats throughout North America, Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and Australia. Indeed, this is such a central group to the worldwide flora that the genus was established by Linnaeus himself in 1753, and studied extensively by the father of American horticulture, Liberty Hyde Bailey, during the early years of his career.

The sedges also have some common identification features. All good freshman botany students will remember that rushes are round and sedges have edges—that is, the leafy portions of all sedges are pro-

The striking golden color of *Carex elata* 'Aurea' (aka 'Bowles' Golden') is most vibrant when grown in full sun and in moist to wet soil.

duced in an angular, three-parted arrangement, giving them a triangular cross section with sharp edges. In fact, the genus name *Carex* derives from the Greek, *keiros*, which translates roughly as, “to cut,” in reference to the sharp edges.

Most *Carex* species produce wind-pollinated spring flowers on short spikes that dance above the newly emerging foliage. They are of little interest in the garden other than to produce seed. Seeds are borne in an achene—a dry, single-seeded fruit. They mature between early summer and fall depending on the species, and most germinate after 60 days of cold conditioning or stratification.

The taxonomy of *Carex* is, at best, a little messy; at worst, an absolute catastrophe. There is little agreement in the scientific literature, and even less in the garden world. Given the dissension in the ranks, I’ve followed what seems to be common-sense nomenclature based on my experience with the plants.

GARDEN ATTRIBUTES

Carex for the garden come in evergreen, deciduous, clumping, and spreading forms. The best of the garden selections offer gold or white variegation, occasionally bright greens, and oftentimes, fine,



Planted en masse, *Carex morrowii* ‘Ice Dance’ forms a graceful, variegated groundcover.

HABITAT PREFERENCES

Worldwide, most *Carex* species are found in moist woodlands, damp pockets, or even growing right out of open water. As such, they are best placed in the garden



Carex elata ‘Aurea’ thrives with its roots submerged along the edge of a stream, providing a bold contrast with *Penstemon digitalis* ‘Husker Red’ and a red rose.

in similar haunts. Although most respond well to average garden soil regimes, they generally tolerate more water than most garden plants. Many perform admirably in full sun, but only with lots of moisture. When in question, wedge them in that spot that most plants want, but none of us have in sufficient supply: morning sun, afternoon high shade, with deep, moist, and rich soil. —P.C.

arching presentations. Depending on the selection, they are excellent choices for brightening up a dark corner of the garden, for sweeping groundcover masses, or as delightful container specimens. “Many *Carex* species and cultivars are sufficiently dramatic to be used as focal points or highlights, however I frequently use sedges as groundcovers,” says Rick Darke, author of *The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes*.

Darke, whose designs are often inspired by habitat associations, says “I’m fond of using sedges with ferns, especially in woodland gardens.” Sedges can be effectively combined with a wide variety of plants, as long as their cultural needs are similar. “Since sedges, like grasses, tend to be relatively fine-textured, with narrow linear leaves, virtually any herbaceous perennial, tree, or shrub with broad leaves is certain to provide bold contrast,” says Darke.

While deer tend to avoid most of the *Carex* species,

there are exceptions, which are noted in the following descriptions.

OUTSTANDING SELECTIONS

At Yew Dell Gardens in Crestwood, Kentucky, we’ve spent the last five years testing and evaluating a wide range of *Carex* species and cultivars for garden use.

We also worked with John Hoffman of Hoffman Nursery, a wholesale nursery in Rougemont, North Carolina, to further evaluate a wide diversity of *Carex* species. The nursery offers more than 30 selections and they grow many more for evaluation. The selections that follow represent what might be considered an all-star line-up of sedges.

Carex ciliatomarginata ‘Treasure Island’ (USDA Hardiness Zones 5–9, AHS Heat Zones 9–5) is a wonderful plant that originated as a sport of *C.* ‘Shima Nishiki’. Introduced by Hans Hansen of Shady Oaks Nursery in Waseca, Minnesota, ‘Treasure Island’ is a six-inch-tall, slow spreader with broad, flattish leaves of medium green edged in bright white. It goes fully dormant for winter and offers little in the way of fall foliage color. It is occasionally mistaken for *C. siderosticha* ‘Variegata’, but to anyone with eyes, these are clearly different plants.

Take ‘Treasure Island’ and replace the white variegation with yellow, and essentially, you’ll have *C.* ‘Shima Nishiki’ (Zones 5–8, 8–5). Hoffman rates both

these selections as tops for use as accent plants. “Planted among green and dark green plants, they make a bold statement, but they really pop when they’re surrounded by yellow flowers or golden foliage,” says Hoffman. *Shima Nishiki* translates to the name under which the selection is usually sold in the United States, ‘Island Brocade’.

Graceful and elegant—these are the two most appropriate superlatives for *C. dolichostachya* var. *glaberrima* ‘Kaga Nishiki’ (Zones 5–9, 9–5). Growing 10 inches tall and two feet wide with gold-edged, quarter-inch-wide leaves, ‘Kaga Nishiki’ offers a fine, wispy texture that pairs wonderfully with bold-leaved plants such as hostas or *Brunnera*. It will take full sun, but only with a good supply of water. Remove the evergreen foliage in late winter to early spring for a fresh start to the season. This clumper is sometimes sold under the translated name ‘Gold Fountains’.

Carex elata ‘Aurea’ (Zones 5–9, 9–3) is a bright gold-foliaged selection that will grow two to three feet wide and tall with an upright arching growth habit. Hoffman rates it as the best selection for full sun and suggests planting it in masses around the border of a pond. It needs high light situations to develop maximum color and vigor—it will grow in the shade, but its leaves turn lime green. Just don’t forget the water, particularly in the southern part of its range. In fact, ‘Aurea’ can actually be grown with its roots submerged in water. This is a fully deciduous species that offers no winter foliage impact. It’s not the best selection for containers because the water requirement is too high and a single missed watering can spell disaster. It is often sold as *C. elata* ‘Bowles’ Golden’.

Introduced by the legendary Japanese plantsman Masato Yokoi, ‘Silver Sceptre’ (Zones 5–9, 12–1) was selected for its fine, quarter-inch-wide, white-edged leaves. Hoffman considers it the best *Carex* for use as a groundcover. “Its leaves curve lightly to the ground as if it had been set on hair rollers and then brushed out in the perfect soft wave,” he says.

It grows 12 to 15 inches tall and wide, and offers fine-textured, bright green leaves throughout the year. “The variegation is quite refined,” says Darke. “It is tough enough to grow in full sun here in Pennsylvania (USDA Zone 6) or



Above: Low-growing *Carex ciliatmarginata* ‘Treasure Island’ brightens up a shade garden. Top: *Carex dolichostachya* var. *glaberrima* ‘Kaga Nishiki’ produces graceful fountains of foliage.

MORE GARDEN-WORTHY SEDGES

Sedge growers from different parts of the country, including John Hoffman, owner of Hoffman Nursery in Rougemont, North Carolina; Rick Darke, author of *The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes* from Landenberg, Pennsylvania; John Greenlee, nursery owner and author of *The Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses* from Pomona, California; and Jim Brockmeyer, owner of Bluestem Nursery in Christian Lake, British Columbia, offered some of their favorite selections for gardens in their regions. Some that were standouts in the Yew Dell trials were cited, but there were many others. Many of the selections below thrive in multiple regions. As Greenlee says, “The adaptability of these sedges is absolutely tremendous.” —Rita Pelczar, Contributing Editor

Name	Height/Spread (inches)	Form	Foliage	Origin	USDA Hardiness, AHS Heat Zones
NORTHEAST					
<i>Carex appalachia</i> (Appalachian sedge)	6–10/18	weeping, clump-forming	green	eastern North America	4–7, 7–1
<i>C. laxiculmis</i>	12/18	clump-forming evergreen	green to gray-blue	eastern North America	4–9, 9–5
<i>C. laxiculmis</i> ‘Hobb’ (also sold as Bunny Blue™)	12/18	clump-forming evergreen	silvery blue	eastern North America	4–9, 9–5
<i>C. pennsylvanica</i> (Pennsylvania sedge)	8–10/12–18	arching, semi-evergreen, spreading	green	eastern North America	4–8, 8–1
SOUTHEAST					
<i>Carex buchananii</i> (leatherleaf sedge)	20–30/36	clump-forming evergreen	coppery red-brown	New Zealand	7–9, 9–6
<i>C. comans</i> ‘Bronze’	12–18/30	clump-forming evergreen	fine, brownish white	New Zealand	7–9, 9–7
<i>C. grayi</i> (Gray’s sedge)	24–36/24	clump forming semi-evergreen	light green	eastern and central North America	3–8, 8–1
<i>C. muskingumensis</i> ‘Oehme’ (variegated palm sedge)	12–24/12–24	slow spreading deciduous	green with yellow margins	central North America	4–9, 8–1
PACIFIC NORTHWEST					
<i>Carex dipsacea</i> (autumn sedge)	18–22/12–18	fountainlike clumps, semi-evergreen	olive green, turning reddish orange in fall	New Zealand	7–10, 10–7
<i>C. flacca</i> ‘Blue Zinger’	8–16/12–18	spreading, semi-evergreen	blue-gray	Europe, northern Africa	5–9, 9–5
<i>C. nudata</i> (California black-flowering sedge)	18–24/12–18	clump-forming deciduous	gray-green, turns yellow-orange in fall	northwestern U.S.	7–9, 9–7
<i>C. pendula</i> (drooping sedge)	36–48/60	large, clump-forming evergreen	medium green with blue-green undersides	Europe, northern Africa	5–9, 9–5
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND SOUTHWEST					
<i>Carex cherokeensis</i> (Cherokee sedge)	18/12–18	clump-forming evergreen	green to chartreuse	southeastern U.S.	6–9, 9–6
<i>C. divulsa</i> (syn. <i>C. tumulicola</i>)	12/18	clump-forming evergreen	dark green in sun or shade (good lawn alternative)	Europe	4–9, 9–4
<i>C. pansa</i> (California meadow sedge)	6–8/12–24	creeper, evergreen to semi-evergreen	green (good lawn alternative)	western North America	6–9, 9–5
<i>C. texensis</i> (Catlin sedge)	3–4/12–18	dwarf clump-forming evergreen	medium green	southwestern U.S.	5–10, 10–5

Sources

Digging Dog Nursery, Albion, CA.
(707) 937-1130.
www.diggingdog.com.

Earthly Pursuits, Inc. Windsor Mill,
MD. (410) 496-2523.
www.earthlypursuits.net.

Forestfarm, Williams, OR. (541) 846-
7269. www.forestfarm.com.

Lee's Gardens, Tremont, IL. (309)
925-5262. www.leesgardens.com.

Mason Hollow Nursery, Mason, NH.
(603) 878-4347. www.masonhollow.com.

Variegated Foliage, Eastford, CT.
(860) 974-3951. www.variegatedfoliage.com.

Resources

The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes by Rick Darke. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2007.



Carex 'Silver Sceptre' is a good choice for a dense, weed-suppressing groundcover.

under a dense canopy of deciduous trees." It is also an excellent selection for use in containers.

Carex morrowii 'Gold Band' (Zones 5–9, 12–1) has broader leaves than 'Silver Sceptre' and offers pale yellow margins to each leaf, giving the entire affair more of a green and cream overall look. 'Gold Band' can get a little tattered through the winter in the northern part of its range but overall, it is one of the better performers year round. Unlike other *C. morrowii* selections, it's a clump-former rather than a spreader.

White edges on half-inch-wide leaves and a little more vigorous spreading habit combine to make *C. morrowii* 'Ice Dance' (Zones 5–9, 12–1) an excellent selection for a shady spot in the garden. Growing to 15 inches tall and 18 inches wide, it works well as a small spreading groundcover, container specimen, and edging plant.

Carex morrowii var. *temnolepis* 'Silk Tassel' (Zones 6–9, 12–1) is the finest textured of all the *C. morrowii* selections,

producing plants 24 inches tall and wide with gracefully arching, white-edged leaves. The extremely fine leaves provide the plant with more of a silvery hue, in contrast to many of the other cultivars with distinctly two-toned leaves. Introduced by Barry Yinger, now of Asiatica Nursery, it works as well in the ground as it does in containers, and can take full sun if given adequate soil moisture, although a little shade is usually better.

One of the early *Carex* entries into the popular garden market, *C. oshimensis* 'Evergold' (Zones 5–9, 12–1) is a tough performer for sun and shade gardens. The 15- to 18-inch-tall and -wide plants contribute a relatively soft effect to a garden. Its leaves are a quarter-inch-wide with green centers and yellow-gold margins. Hoffman considers it the best sedge for growing in containers, and suggests combining it with tall grasses and contrasting flowering plants. At Yew Dell Gardens, it has done well in our sunny rock garden, where it has shown reasonable drought tolerance. At home, I've

had 'Evergold' perform beautifully in my shady garden, paired with *Helleborus* 'Pine Knott Selections', *Hosta* 'Bressingham Blue', and an array of large ferns. The only caution is to avoid severely cutting back the winter foliage too early. A light clipping as new leaves emerge is best.

A smallish, rather stiff grower, *C. phyllocephala* 'Sparkler' (Zones 8–10, 10–7) lacks the grace of some of the *C. morrowii* selections. But what it lacks in arching grace, it more than makes up for in curb appeal. The 15- to 18-inch-tall plants bear broad, bright white-edged leaves that look more like miniature variegated yuccas or tiny variegated palms than sedges. This Barry Yinger selection is a moderate spreader rather than a clumper and will grow best in a shady site where it will receive regular water.

Seersucker sedge (*C. plantaginea*, Zones 5–7, 7–5) is a bright green species for shady gardens; a break from the variegated selections. Broad, inch-wide leaves with a puckered texture grow somewhat



Carex oshimensis 'Evergold', once established, is reasonably drought tolerant.

stiffly upright to create a plant eight to 10 inches tall and 10 to 12 inches wide. The leaves remain in excellent condition in the garden throughout the winter, and, at least in my USDA Zone 6 garden, usually do not need to be cut back prior to spring growth. Provide plenty of moisture and somewhat rich soil but also be prepared to

put up a deer fence. Deer will nibble this species to the ground in no time flat. That must mean there are plenty of sedge-eating deer around, because *C. plantaginea* is native throughout all of eastern North America except Florida and Nova Scotia.

Carex siderosticha 'Variegata' (Zones 6–9, 9–6) grows eight to 10 inches tall

and spreads quite rapidly, making it a good groundcover. Four-inch plugs planted two feet apart will fill in nicely in about two growing seasons. It will grow best in a shady, moist site and is completely deciduous. Hoffman suggests combining it with fine-textured perennials and grasses.

I've saved the oddball for last: orange New Zealand sedge (*Carex testacea*, Zones 6–9, 8–6). Take a two-foot-tall and -wide plant with wispy, arching, grasslike leaves of olive green, add summer highlights of bright orange and russet, and you'll have the idea here. The later in the season, the brighter the color. This selection works in moist, well-drained soil and is reasonably drought tolerant once established. As one might



If well protected from deer, the rich green leaves of *Carex plantaginea* are attractive year round in the shade garden.

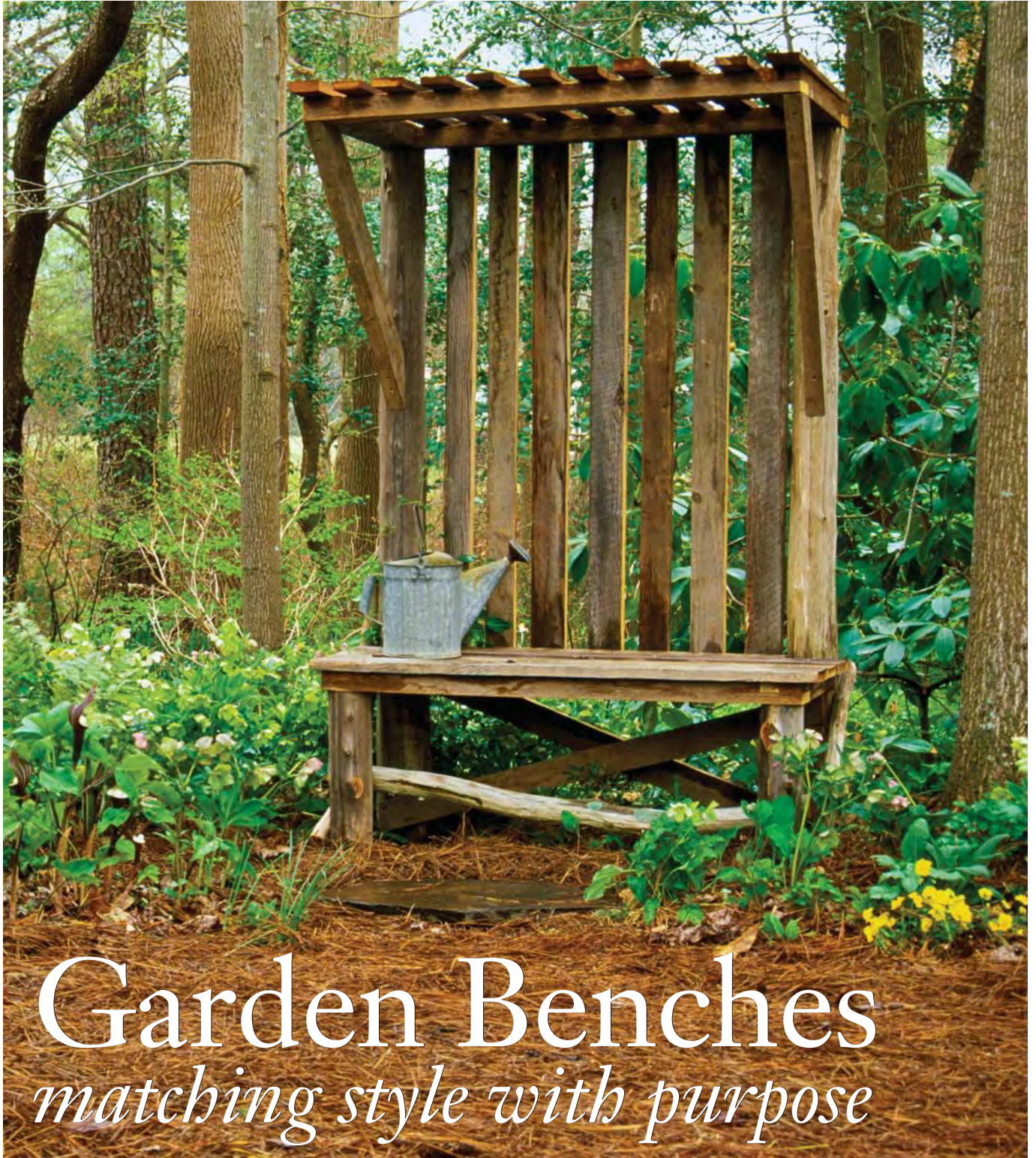
guess, it loves the sun. This is an excellent selection for mixed containers where it pairs well with bright oranges and blues. Prairie Fire® is a seed strain that produces plants more upright than is typical for the species.

With selections that vary in their preferences from full sun to full shade, and uses that range from groundcovers and pondside accents to specimens and container plants, there are choices of *Carex* for just about every garden.

Paul Cappiello is executive director of Yew Dell Gardens, located in Crestwood, Kentucky, where, among other activities, he conducts research to select, introduce, and evaluate new ornamental plants.



The leaves of *Carex phyllocephala* 'Sparkler' are clustered near the ends of two-foot stems.



Garden Benches

matching style with purpose

There are as many styles of garden benches as there are gardens. Here are tips from the experts to help you choose the right one for your landscape.

BY VIRGINIA SMALL

Situated amid hellebores and rhododendrons, this rustic bench in a Virginia shade garden echoes the soaring lines of the surrounding trees.



Above: Set back against a variety of boldly colored and textured plants, the rustic bench under a log arbor in this garden designed by Richard R. Iversen offers a sense of privacy together with an unobstructed view of the pool. **Left:** A “floating” oak bench built out from a low stone wall harmonizes with the other geometric elements in this small, modern garden patio.



Top: Located at the end of a crabapple allée, a bench serves as a focal point in the garden of Connecticut designer Lynden Miller. **Above:** A rustic table and bench encourage lingering in this quiet garden nook.

MANY AVID GARDENERS proclaim that they never sit still in their own gardens. Even if you're forever weeding, transplanting, and deadheading, a bench can provide much more than just a place to sit.

BENCHES AS A PART OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A well-placed bench often performs multiple roles in a garden. A bench can serve as a focal point and embellish a scene, or act as the anchor of a planting vignette that changes from season to season. Viewing a garden bench from a distance, even from indoors, can visually lure us into a landscape. If it offers comfort and sensory appeal, it will encourage lingering in the garden.

A bench can also set or reinforce a mood or garden style. An ornate or one-of-a-kind bench heightens visual interest. In the Portland, Oregon, garden of garden designer Lucy Hardiman, the mosaic-covered, backless bench she made takes center stage and serves as a conversation piece. Created from tile seconds and pieces of old china, it's set within an oversized Victorian-inspired arbor that her husband designed and built to tie in with their Victorian home.

The Hardimans also installed a bench in their front yard to perform a completely different function. Set within a stone retaining wall at the corner of their urban lot, it invites passersby to take respite, surrounded by lush plantings.



Sheltered areas for benches can be formal or informal. Above: A swinging bench in a white lattice gazebo offers an ideal vantage point for enjoying the tranquil beauty of this Idaho shade garden. Left: Oregon garden designer Lucy Hardiman's lively contemporary mosaic bench, created by Hardiman from bits of tile and broken pottery, contrasts with the sedate rose-and-clematis-covered, Victorian-inspired arbor that frames it.



The gravel-and-flagstone-paved front yard of garden designer Steve Silk's residence features a simple wooden bench that arrests the eye of visitors at the end of the walkway before they reach the entrance of the house. "I wanted a more dramatic effect for the bench," says Silk, "so I clustered a number of pots—planted with a mix of hardy and tender shrubs and a few perennials—in order to make a little bit of a wall around it."



Painted pale blue, this delicate-looking metal bench, designed with a chambered nautilus shell motif, easily doubles as a piece of sculpture in this southern California garden.

A WIDE CHOICE OF MATERIALS

Classic wooden benches are arguably the most traditional type of garden seating. Aged to a natural shade of gray, they suit many settings. Seating made from rustic wood conveys a sense of informal naturalism. Well-designed rustic benches add artistic flair.

An aluminum bench with sleek lines can contribute to a modern motif, while an intricately decorative wrought-iron bench harmonizes well with a planting scheme that brims with textures and colors.

Photographer and garden designer Steve Silk likes to paint wooden and metal benches in his Farmington, Connecticut, garden to add a blast of bright color to a setting or to blend with surrounding colors. "Painting garden furniture is also a great way to have color in my garden year round," says Silk. "I have a chartreuse-and-blue bench that almost glows on gray or snowy days. The other great thing about painting is that you can easily change the color on a whim."

CONSIDER COMFORT AND DURABILITY

With so many options available, it can be helpful to ask yourself a few questions before selecting a bench for your garden. Do you want it to be appealing for an extended respite or a place that invites only a pause? Many wooden benches offer a high level of comfort and some are designed with a slight curvature in the seat and arm rests to enhance their appeal. Backless benches are often more suited for brief interludes, but they can add a serene sense of simplicity to a garden scene.

If your bench will remain outdoors year round, you'll want to consider its durability. For both longevity and comfort, choose a weather-tolerant, rot-resistant wood such as sustainably harvested teak, cypress, cedar, or redwood. Also seek out wood benches constructed with mortise-and-tenon joinery; benches joined by lots of screws and bolts tend to be less durable. Metal, stone, or concrete benches also rank high on the durability scale, but may offer less in the way of comfort, depending on their design.

PLACING A BENCH FOR MAXIMUM ENJOYMENT

So how do you decide where to place a bench? In a garden setting, a bench should provide a spot to savor an attractive view and, if possible, other sensory delights. Maybe you want to enjoy your sunny border from a niche that gets a bit of shade, perhaps beneath a pergola or under a tree. Or you may want to place a bench in a nook where you'll feel soothed by the sights and sounds of a water feature.

You'll get more enjoyment out of fragrant plants if there's a bench nearby. You can even plan a sequence of seasonal scent around an anchoring seat, such as fragrant spring bulbs, followed by lilacs or a Korean spice viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii*) followed by summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*).

Lucy Hardiman favors having multiple benches in a garden. "You'll appreciate a garden more if you experience it from different vantage points," she says. "It's great to have a bench that's hidden from view until you chance upon it as a surprise. A hidden bower with a bench gives a nice sense of privacy."

Garden designer and author Julie Moir Messervy of Saxtons River, Vermont, believes that people always feel more secure and relaxed on a bench when it's "backed up" by a wall, fence, hedge, or mass planting of shrubs or grasses. A bench that's smack-dab in the middle of an open lawn, even if it faces a lovely view, tends to feel less enticing. To provide shelter from the elements, Messervy suggests placing a bench under an arbor or trellis, or the cover of a garden house, pavilion, or gazebo.

In her new book, *Home Outside: Creating the Landscape You Love* (Taunton Press, 2009), Messervy also stresses the importance of relating a bench to its surroundings. "For example, a white house with a white picket fence won't look quite right with a rustic twig bench in the front yard." In this case, she recommends choosing a simple white-stained bench instead—or one painted the color of the house trim. "On the other hand," she adds, "the farther away from the house you get, the more rustic the seating can be. That same twig bench would look great in a woodland setting. A stone slab seat looks wonderful near natural fieldstone walls."

One way to make the most of any bench is to move it around until its placement feels right. You'll know you've hit the mark when a bench entices you to quit weeding and settle in for a quiet moment.

Garden writer Virginia Small's most recent book is *Great Gardens of the Berkshires* (Down East Books, 2008). She lives in Woodbury, Connecticut.



The right bench in the right spot makes a garden more beautiful and inviting. Top: A roomy metal bench with matching table transforms a patio into an outdoor living space. Above: An unobtrusive cast concrete bench provides a place for a quick respite in a woodland garden. Left: In this garden designed by Michael Bates, a classic wooden bench is an ideal spot for stopping to smell the roses.

First Lady of Salvias



After a lifetime of gardening experience in different regions, Betsy Clebsch has become a leading expert on the genus *Salvia*.

BY CAROLE OTTESEN

PEOPLE COME TO gardening for many reasons. Some take it up as young adults in the glow of first homeownership. Others wait until retirement allows them unscheduled hours to putter in the garden. Still others seem destined to garden; Betsy Clebsch, author of *A Book of Salvias*, is one of these people.

Clebsch spent her childhood in gardens, and created five gardens in three vastly different climates as an adult. Those experiences opened her eyes to the native floras of diverse habitats as it ignited a passion for plants—especially salvias. Over a lifetime, she has become one of the pre-eminent experts on the genus and is highly regarded among both California and national horticultural circles.



“Betsy was able to tackle one of our most challenging plant groups—the salvias—and, in doing so, provided a usable guide to these beloved garden plants,” says Holly Shimizu, executive director of the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

Clebsch hails from Marion, Virginia, a place she calls “the heart of the Blue Ridge.” There, she grew up in a gardening family. “From the time I can remember anything, my mother had a wonderful small garden. Both of my grandmothers had beautiful gardens.”

“One grandmother in particular knew a lot about plants,” recalls Clebsch. “She

Salvia sonomensis is a perennial species that forms creeping mats, usually less than a foot tall, and is useful as a groundcover, as shown here on this hillside garden in California. Inset: Betsy Clebsch. Above: The annual *Salvia columbariae* blooms in late spring or early summer.

collected plants back in the '20s and '30s." It was a time before growing much more than vegetables and a few flowers was common. "Gardening wasn't a passion with people back then as it is now."

Another memory—her mother's single-minded dedication to her garden—was an example she would later follow: When Clebsch was in high school, her parents had a new house built. She remembers at the time that everyone in town was talking about her mother's new garden. It was up and growing long before the house was finished.

THE FIRST OF FIVE GARDENS

Given her early environment, it isn't surprising that as an adult Clebsch eagerly

the way of her plans for a garden. At the time, "nobody wanted to take trees down," she says, so it was a problem that was solved through divine intervention. That big ash came tumbling down in the fierce winds of a freak summer storm. When the sky cleared, she was free to pursue her designs.

Looking for something to plant under the big, splendid oaks on the property, she decided rhododendrons would be perfect. She had only to mention that wish to her mother and it was a *fait accompli*. "She was wonderful," says Clebsch. "She brought rhododendrons all the way from southwest Virginia."

Like many young couples in academia, the Clebsch family didn't stay in one

garden successfully in Texas. "The Texas garden was strictly ornamental; I grew the ordinary things that people planted in Austin," she says. But what riveted her interest in the new climate was what she saw in the wild. On picnics in the Hill Country, she became utterly fascinated by the native flora, so different from the wildflowers she had loved while growing up in Virginia. The Texas natives piqued in Clebsch an interest in plants that went beyond gardening. "I found I really enjoyed plants for their own sake."

THE FIRST CALIFORNIA GARDEN

In 1964, another move took the Clebsch family to Stanford, California. The house they moved into on the Stanford campus came with a garden that had been "done."

"A garden designer put it in," Clebsch remembers. "I had to undo it." There was just one sticking point: "I had to get my husband to agree on everything. That was a big struggle!" She credits the mild California climate with the fact that after she removed the old garden, the new one quickly matured.

After Virginia and Texas, California's salubrious climate made gardening there almost paradise. In California, Clebsch's interest in plants and gardens burgeoned. She also came into contact with plant people who were to have tremendous influence upon her. One of the first was Barbara Worl, who shared with Clebsch her interest in heritage roses. "Heritage roses at that time were not popular, and plants were terribly hard to find. Most of them were propagated by cuttings by the people who wanted to grow them," recalls Clebsch. But before long, she had assembled her own collection.

CALIFORNIA NATIVES

Soon after moving to Stanford, Clebsch became involved with the Saratoga Horticulture Foundation, a non-profit organization in San Martin that introduced many native varieties of trees and ornamental plants to the public. She became a docent there almost immediately. Her volunteer work at the Foundation deepened her interest in and knowledge of the indigenous plants of California.

The other important milestone for Clebsch after moving to California was meeting Gerda Isenberg, the founder of



At her Stanford home, Clebsch removed the existing garden and replaced it with one of her own design that reflected her growing interest in California native plants.

made gardens of her own. The first one was in Alexandria, Virginia.

"That was in the '50s," she remembers. "We lived in a pre-Revolutionary house." It was owned by the Virginia Theological Seminary, which at the time, employed her husband, William. Although the Alexandria years were busy ones—Clebsch had two small children at that time—she made "a wonderful garden there." But an old property comes with a past. This one had its pluses and minuses.

The main drawback was "a lot of trash trees that had seeded in," she says. In particular, a very large ash stood literally in

place for long. They moved from Alexandria to make their next home and their second garden in Austin, Texas, where they were to remain for six years. The change in climates, which might have been daunting to many, was stimulating to Clebsch.

THE TEXAS GARDEN

"Austin, Texas, was utterly different from Virginia. I was always making comparisons," says Clebsch. "It was a learning experience."

Despite the differences in climate, or perhaps because of them, she learned to

Yerba Buena Nursery in Woodside, California. The two quickly became close friends, remembers Clebsch.

Isenberg raised only natives at Yerba Buena, making it one of the first native plant nurseries in the state. That was in 1967, a time before many natives were accepted as garden plants. “People were scared to death of natives,” Clebsch recalls. “Even professional gardeners didn’t want to fool with them.”

Meanwhile, Clebsch’s enthusiasm for native flora continued to grow. She started hiking on Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, in the eastern foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The preserve—Stanford University property—is home to diverse native plant communities, carefully managed to remain in as natural a state as possible. There, she was able to see the kinds of California landscapes that existed long before the freeways and extensive development.

Often when she hiked on Jasper Ridge, it was in the company of Herb Dengler. “He was a gentleman who knew it intimately,” says Clebsch. “He had

walked that thousand acres since he was a child. It really was a privilege to walk with him and I learned lots about plant relationships.”

Dengler also told her about ancient human settlement and activity on Jasper Ridge. She learned that “Indians who lived on the coast in winter would take advantage of the seasons and make a trek across the mountains.” In early summer,

that was special in and of itself,” says Clebsch. “No wonder the Indians picked it; it’s protected from winds and weather. It has a fresh running stream. They say that steelheads spawned in there.”

Like her mother before her, Clebsch had built a garden before a house. In her case, however, the garden was installed before the new house was even sited on the property. Unfortunately, when a site



As demonstrated in Clebsch’s California garden above, salvias come in a wide range of color, form, and size. “I believe once you have grown salvias you will always have space for a few in your garden,” writes Clebsch.

Resources

A Book of Salvias by Betsy Clebsch. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 1997.

The New Book of Salvias by Betsy Clebsch. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2003.

Sources

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J.L. Hudson, Seedsman, La Honda, CA. www.jlhudsonseeds.com.

Joy Creek Nursery, Scappoose, OR. (503) 543-7474. www.joycreek.com.

Logee’s Greenhouses, Danielson, CT. (888) 330-8038. www.logees.com.

Southwestern Native Seeds, Tucson, AZ. www.southwesternnativeseeds.com.

“they settled at a place on Jasper Ridge” where grinding stones have been found.

THE LOST GARDEN

It was with Dengler’s stories ringing in her memory that Clebsch began a fourth garden on a parcel of land she and her husband purchased in the mountains south of Stanford. While still living on the Stanford campus, her husband “put in a small trailer to keep all of our supplies” and they began camping there.

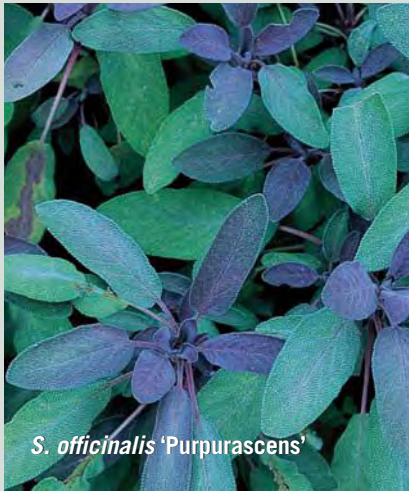
Clebsch started a garden in a place where Native Americans had traditionally stopped and stayed “when they made the trek from the ocean to the Bay.” As if the spirits of those long-ago Indians hovered nearby, that garden was imbued with an aura that people who visited the garden could feel. “That’s because it was in a place

was chosen for the house, it turned out to be a good distance from the garden. For a while after moving into the new house, she tried to keep up the garden, but it was a struggle. Finally, Gerda Isenberg advised Clebsch to abandon the garden, which she did.

“I deserted that garden 22 years ago,” Clebsch says. But, ever the observer of natural processes, she remarks, “if you look down there today you will find one rose, members of the mint family, and quite a few apple trees, despite no water and plentiful animals.”

THE FIFTH GARDEN

Eventually, she started a new garden convenient to the house. There, it was inevitable that Clebsch would gravitate to salvias. “The climate here is so benign



S. officinalis 'Purpurascens'



S. spathacea



S. tingitana



S. leucophylla

BETSY CLEBSCH'S FAVORITE SALVIAS

Asked to name a few of her personal favorites, Betsy Clebsch was hard pressed to narrow down the list, but came up with the following perennial species.

S. dolomitica grows three feet tall and wide with striking gray-white evergreen leaves.

S. leucophylla is a California native with purple spring flowers and gray-green evergreen foliage.

S. officinalis 'Purpurascens', a cultivar of common sage, produces rich purple-gray edible leaves.

S. sclarea, or clary sage, bears flowers held in large, showy floral bracts ranging in shades from mauve, pink, and lilac to white.

S. sonomensis bears pale to deep lavender flowers and makes a stunning ground-cover or edging for the front of a dry border.

S. spathacea, or pitcher sage, produces large, deep purple flowers over several months in spring; the bracts and calyces remain attractive after flowers fade.

S. tingitana is an excellent border plant with an erect habit, attractive lime-green leaves, and late spring bicolored flowers.

compared to the other places where I lived," she says. "There are a huge number of things that you can grow, but the stature of the salvias was what first caught my eye."

The ones she was particularly attracted to were from Mexico. "They're huge—so generous in size and flower. Many grow four to five feet high and some even to six feet." She acquired a number of them for her new garden.

When her daughter came for a visit, the garden was established. Clebsch gave her a tour, naming the plants as she strolled along. When the tour ended, her

daughter turned to her and said, "Mother, you call every other plant a salvia."

ON THE SALVIA TRAIL

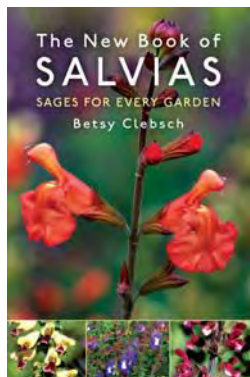
It suddenly occurred to Clebsch that, beyond the designation "salvia," she hadn't the slightest idea what the species or cultivar names of her plants were. In that "aha" moment, she realized that it wasn't just her own lack of knowledge; most salvias simply didn't have legitimate, recognized names.

She had bought the salvias growing in her garden from sales at different botanic gardens. "All were mislabeled," she says.

"And nobody knew what they were." So began her quest to bring order to the genus *Salvia*. It began in the 1970s and, she says, "it's going on still."

In the beginning, she would try to find out the identity of one or more salvias by contacting an expert. Each time she visited a botanic garden and sought information from a new expert, she came away with new salvia cuttings. In addition to putting the correct names on plants, she was gaining hands-on experience with the various species, substantially enlarging her salvia collection, and amassing—unwittingly—the information for her book,

which was first published in 1997. *A Book of Salvias* became an instant classic and the go-to book for anyone interested in growing salvias. The updated edition, *The New Book of Salvias*, was published six



years later and includes 50 additional species and cultivars.

“Betsy’s in-depth gardening experience with virtually every plant described in her books, along with exhaustive research to back

up her anecdotal observations, makes these publications invaluable to those of us who adore the genus *Salvia*,” says Carol Bornstein, director of nursery and horticultural outreach at the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens. “I particularly appreciate the many delightful suggestions for suitable garden companions.”

Those who helped her identify the salvias comprise a who’s who of California horticulturists, including Bornstein; Herb Dengler and John Thomas of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve; Kathy Musial, a botanist at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino; Don Mahoney of Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco; and Ernie Wassum and Kathe Navarez of Cabrillo College. According to Clebsch, “Cabrillo boasts the best collection of salvias in the United States and probably the best in the world.”

PLANT HUNTING

Over the years Clebsch has also accompanied friends and colleagues on forays into the wild to see and collect salvias and other plants in their natural habitats. She accompanied Frank Almeda, botanist at the California Academy of Science, to Madagascar and Dennis Breedlove, a botanist who wrote the definitive *Flora de Chiapas*, on trips to that Mexican state. She remembers Almeda as “wonderful; one of those people who encourage you” and Breedlove as “a real expert who could speak different Indian dialects.”

She traveled with John Fairey, a founder of Yucca Do Nursery and owner of Peckerwood Garden in Hempstead,



Above: Although many salvias flourished in Clebsch’s California garden, many were unnamed or misnamed. Clebsch spent years unraveling their relationships. **Left:** Clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*) is an early summer bloomer that grows three to four feet tall.

Texas, to Mexico on three occasions. Of Fairey, she says, “He knows all of those back roads and how to get to different habitats.”

And she’s accompanied Bart O’Brien, a senior staff research associate at Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden in Claremont, California, on many trips. “Betsy is responsible for my interest and work with California’s and Baja California’s native sages,” says O’Brien, who first met Clebsch while working at Yerba Buena. “Together we’ve tracked down *Salvia* species in Baja California and in the deserts of southern California.”

O’Brien named a cultivar, *Salvia clevelandii* ‘Betsy Clebsch’, in her honor. “It grows three to four feet tall and spreads equally wide. The flowers vary in color and are bright blue and pure white—individual flowers may be one color or the other, or they may be variously split between the two colors,” says O’Brien.

“As I’ve grown older, the friendships I’ve made during all of this have lasted,” says Clebsch. “I’m devoted to many of these people.”

A LIFE IN PLANTS

“Gardening,” as Clebsch likes to say, “has been a thread pulled tight throughout my life.”

She has shared this passion for gardening and plants with the botanists and horticulturists who enriched her life with their friendships. And by following the lead of her curiosity she has enriched our collective knowledge of and appreciation for native plants—especially salvias. 🌿

Carole Ottesen is a contributing writer for The American Gardener.



water-thrifty Rockroses

BY NEIL BELL

Rockroses (*Cistus* and *Halimium* spp.) are relatively new to American gardeners, but a recent evaluation in Oregon has identified promising new cultivars of these drought-tolerant, evergreen plants for gardens in summer-dry climates.

ROCKROSES (*Cistus* spp.) and their close relations in the genus *Halimium* are evergreen shrubs in the cistus family (Cistaceae). Their native range stretches from the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean through the Mediterranean basin to the Caucasus Mountains of eastern Europe, but rockroses and halimiums have become popu-

lar in other regions that have Mediterranean-style climates. Their evergreen, aromatic foliage and showy flowers are welcome benefits for the challenging sites where rockroses thrive. Because of their tolerance of poor soil and drought, rockroses perform reliably growing along dry banks, parking lot islands, and other locations where water is a limiting factor

and many common landscape plants struggle. They are also resistant to browsing by deer and other herbivores.

Like other shrubs of Mediterranean origin, *Cistus* and *Halimium* species have evolved in regions that experience hot, dry summers and winters that are wet but not excessively cold. This matches the climate along the West Coast of North America,

Top left: Growing to five feet high, *Cistus* 'Snow Fire' has a mounded habit. **Top right:** In addition to striking bicolored blossoms, *Halimocistus wintonensis* 'Merrist Wood Cream' has attractive silvery foliage. **Bottom right:** *Halimium lasianthum* 'Concolor' bears solid yellow flowers.

so it is gardeners from southern California through western Oregon and Washington to southwestern British Columbia who have become most familiar with these plants. Most of the species are hardy to USDA Zone 8 or 9 and heat tolerant to AHS Zone 10. They are rated for Sunset zones 6 to 9 and 14 to 24.

Yet most of the *Cistus* and *Halimium* species and cultivars that exist worldwide are unknown in North America or are being grown only by enthusiasts. The *Cistus* most commonly used in landscaping on the West Coast are *C. ×hybridus*, *C. ×purpureus*, and *C. ladanifer*. The genus *Halimium* is even less commonly used; if a gardener can find one at all, it is most likely to be *H. lasianthum*.

However, availability of new cultivars of both genera has increased recently due to an interest in and—in some regions—an outright need for water-thrifty landscape plants. Gardeners who are only familiar with the commonly-grown selections will be surprised at the diversity of size, form, foliage, and flowers within each of these genera. Given this and their tolerance of drought, it's worth having a closer look at what these plants offer the dry garden.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Rockroses range from small (two to four feet tall) to large (six to eight feet tall) with forms that can be prostrate, mounding, or upright. All have opposite leaves, which may be mid- to dark green or, very commonly, grayish. The flowers are distinctive, having delicate, often crinkled petals that usually drop after being open a few hours. The following morning, a new set of flowers will open, so the flower show continues for two to three weeks, and sporadically for much longer in some cases. The primary flowering time for most species is between April and late June, depending on region.

The flowers of both genera are unscented; in *Cistus* they are usually white, pink, or purplish, while in *Halimium* they are commonly yellow or white. Some may have a spot at the base of each petal. The spent flowers develop into reddish or dark brown capsules, which split open to reveal numerous, small, dark brown or blackish seeds.

The genus *Cistus* is the source of ladanum, an aromatic, viscous resin that is exuded from the leaves and stem hairs



Above: Even after the flowers of *Cistus ladanifer* fade, its leaves and stems continue to scent the garden. **Top:** *Cistus ×purpureus* bears dark pink blooms with burgundy spots.

of some species, notably *C. ladanifer*. Ladanum has been used since antiquity as a component of incense and perfumes and it is still harvested and used in this way in Crete. For the gardener, the value of ladanum is that long after the flowers are finished, the scent of the plants on warm, still, summer nights lingers. “When summer heat comes on, the garden is filled with the perfume,” says Maurice Horn, who grows rockroses in a dry border—amended with fine gravel for drainage—he created at Joy Creek Nursery in Scappoose, Oregon. “But since it’s the foliage and stems that release the fragrance, it’s hard to tell where it is coming from. Once I came upon some nursery visitors down on their knees sniffing for the source of the fragrance.”

ROCKROSES

Cistus is derived from the Greek word *kisthos* or *kistos*, which were the classical names for various species. These days they are commonly known as rockroses,

based on the resemblance of the flowers to old-fashioned, single roses—and on the preferred habitat of the plants, which is rocky, relatively poor soil.

There are about 20 *Cistus* species, which can be conveniently divided into white- and pink-flowered species and hybrids, of which there are many. The white-flowered species include *C. ladanifer*, *C. laurifolius*, *C. monspeliensis*, *C. populifolius*, and *C. salviifolius*. Pink-flowered rockroses include most of the tender species native to the Canary Islands, specifically *C. osbeckifolius*, *C. chinamadensis*, and *C. ochreatus*. Despite their unsuitability for general cultivation, these species have served as a means of introducing dramatic foliar and flower color effects in many hybrids. Hardy pink-flowered species include *C. albidus*, *C. creticus*, *C. crispus*, and *C. heterophyllus*.

All told, there are about 70 hybrid species and cultivars in cultivation. In North America, the best known selection is probably *C. xpurpureus*, a hybrid of *C. creticus* and *C. ladanifer* that grows four feet tall and six feet across. Its pink flowers have a distinctive dark red blotch at the base of each petal. Another com-



***Cistus* 'Grayswood Pink' makes a good groundcover for sunny, dry sites.**

monly used species is *C. xhybridus* (*C. populifolius* × *C. salviifolius*) a rounded shrub that grows to four feet high and six or more feet across and has unblotched white flowers. 'Sunset', a selection of *C. xpulverulentus*, has a very compact habit, growing only two feet tall and three feet

wide with gray-green foliage and magenta flowers. Also low-growing, to two or three feet, is 'Mallorca', a selection of *C. ladanifer* var. *sulcatus* introduced by Sean Hogan of Cistus Nursery in Sauvie Island, Oregon.

HALIMIUM

The seven *Halimium* species currently recognized originate from southern Europe—especially Spain, Portugal, and France—and North Africa. Two species, *H. halimifolium* and *H. lasianthum*, have a reddish or dark brown flower blotch and have passed this trait along to certain selections. "Among the two genera, the plants that have impressed me the most are the halimiums," says Maurice Horn. "The foliage is finer and provides a nice texture to work into a border of other drought-tolerant plants."

Halimium can be divided into white- and yellow-flowered species. The single white-flowered species is *H. umbellatum*, a dwarf plant growing only 18 inches tall but spreading to four feet or more. The best known species, *H. lasianthum*, features silvery foliage and yellow flowers that often have a dark blotch on each petal.

ROCKROSE EVALUATION IN OREGON

Between 2004 and 2007, the author and other horticulturists at Oregon State University evaluated approximately 90 *Cistus* and *Halimium* selections at the university's North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) in Aurora, Oregon. The goal was to evaluate cold hardiness, size, flowering, and general landscape adaptability for Northwest conditions. Planted in unamended silt loam, the plants were irrigated during summer 2004 for establishment, after which they received no summer irrigation. They were not fertilized or pruned for the duration of the evaluation.

Growth of the plants was assessed by measuring height and width each spring. Cold hardiness was evaluated by noting damage from the previous winter. Winter temperatures during the evaluation period were fairly typical of previous years, with no extreme cold events, so few of the cultivars showed any significant cold damage (see NOTE, below).

All plants were evaluated for form and foliage in the late summer of 2006 and 2007, at the end of the drought period, when they might be expected to show maximum stress from heat and lack of water. Some cultivars that were very showy in bloom, such as 'Victor Reiter', 'Doris Hibberson', and *C. xrodiaei* 'Jessica', became sparse and leggy as the trial went on. This problem also plagued popular *C. xargenteus* selections, including 'Silver Pink' and 'Peggy Sammons'. The most commonly-grown rockroses, *C. xhybridus* and *C. xpurpureus*, were only average overall in their appearance after four years.

On the other hand, some cultivars flowered well and retained good form and foliage quality throughout the trial. These, shown in the chart on page 38, merit greater consideration in the landscape.

The complete results of the study will be published in *HortTechnology* this year and will be available on the NWREC website (see "Resources," page 39) later this year.

—N.B.

NOTE: This past winter the Pacific Northwest was hit by heavy snowfall and temperatures dropping as low as 8 degrees Fahrenheit in some places. *Cistus* growers in the region reported problems with greater than average dieback and outright death for some selections, but the plants listed in the chart on page 38 came through with little or no damage, reports Neil Bell. To see Maurice Horn's report on how selections in his dry border fared, visit the web special linked to this article on the AHS website (www.ahs.org).

RECOMMENDED CISTUS AND HALIMIUM SELECTIONS BASED ON NWREC EVALUATION

Name	Height/Width (feet)	Flower color/ Bloom period	Other comments
Large, upright <i>Cistus</i> suitable for specimens or massing			
<i>C. ×aguilarii</i>	7/5	Pure white/May	
<i>C. ×aguilarii</i> ‘Maculatus’	7/5	White with blotch/May	
Large <i>Cistus</i> with a mounded habit useful as tall groundcovers			
‘Gordon Cooper’	5/8	White, smaller, with blotches/mid-May to late June	
‘Ruby Cluster’	4/6	White with blotches/mid-May to mid-June	
‘Snow Fire’	5/8	White with a red blotches/mid-May through late June	
<i>C. inflatus</i> (syn. <i>C. hirsutus</i>)	4/6	White/mid-May to late June	
<i>C. ×laxus</i>	4/6	White/mid-May to late June	
<i>C. salviifolius</i> ‘Gold Star’	4/6	White with yellow stain at the base of the petals/ mid- to late May	
<i>Cistus</i> groundcovers for the smaller garden or containers			
<i>C. ×florentinus</i> ‘Tramontane’	2/5	White/late May to early June	Dense prostrate form
<i>C. ×pulverulentus</i> ‘Sunset’	2/4	Brilliant magenta/late May	Reblooms; mound of gray-green foliage
<i>C. ×obtusifolius</i>	3/5	Pure white/mid-May to late June	
‘Grayswood Pink’	2/4	Pink/early May to June	Good choice for rocky slopes
<i>Halimium</i> selections			
<i>H. ×pauanum</i>	6/5	Yellow/late May through early July	Gray-green foliage
<i>H. lasianthum</i> cultivars			
‘Concolor’	2/5	Yellow/mid-May to mid-June	
‘Farrall’	2/5	Deep yellow/late May to mid-June	
‘Formosum’	2/5	Yellow with blotches/mid-May to late June	
‘Hannay Silver’	4/5	Yellow/mid-May to early June	
‘Sandling’	2/5	Yellow with red blotches/early May to late June	Long bloom period; mounds of silvery foliage
×<i>Halimiocistus</i> selections			
× <i>Halimiocistus sahuicii</i>	1/4	White/May	Forms dense mat

Horn describes it as drought tolerant and “undeterred by the cold weather” of this past winter. *Halimium ocymoides* is a low, spreading plant that has blotched yellow flowers opening from red buds. *H. calycinum*, another low-growing species, has unblotched yellow flowers.

Quite different in form from any of these are *H. atriplicifolium* and *H. halimifolium*. The former is an upright, silvery plant that bears unblotched yellow flowers on short stalks above the foliage. *H. halimifolium* also has an upright habit to four feet. “It has three- to four-inch, fluted, totally silver leaves on a two- to four- foot plant and fairly large, butter-yellow flowers with burgundy in the center,” says Hogan, who adds that it is extremely drought tolerant. The cultivar ‘Maculatus’ bears masses of blotched yellow flowers that open from reddish buds.

H. ×pauanum is a vigorous, upright and very floriferous shrub that grows to six feet tall and has unblotched, yellow flowers. “It is a beautiful landscape shrub—it



Low-growing *Halimium lasianthum* has given rise to numerous attractive cultivars.

holds up well in the garden and has fine silvery foliage—closer to a lavender look,” says Horn. *H. ×santae* is slightly lower-growing (to five feet) and wider, with unblotched yellow flowers.

INTERGENERIC HYBRIDS

Intergeneric hybrids (×*Halimiocistus*) between the two genera have arisen, for the most part, in cultivation. Seedlings raised from such crosses possess characteristics intermediate between the suspected parents. Perhaps the best known of these is ×*Halimiocistus wintonensis*, which has white flowers with a prominent maroon blotch. A selection called ‘Merrist Wood Cream’ is a favorite of *Cistus* Nursery owner Sean Hogan, who describes it as a rounded shrub with finely articulated, silvery foliage. “In April or May it will be smothered in rich creamy-yellow flowers



Sources

Cistus Nursery, Sauvie Island, OR.
(503) 621-2233.
www.cistusnursery.com.

Digging Dog Nursery, Albion, CA.
(707) 937-1130.
www.diggingdog.com.

Forestfarm, Williams, OR. (541)
846-7269. www.forestfarm.com.

Greer Gardens, Eugene, OR. (800)
548-0111. www.greergardens.com.

Joy Creek Nursery, Scappoose, OR.
(503) 543-7474.
www.joycreek.com.

Resources

North Willamette Research and Extension Center, <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC>.

Sunset Western Garden Book, Sunset Publishing Corporation, Menlo Park, California, 2007.

The Cistus and Halimium Website, www.cistuspage.org.uk.



Above: Sharing a sunny border with *Yucca flaccida* 'Golden Sword' and *Yucca filamentosa*, the magenta flowers and silvery foliage of *Cistus* × *pulverulentus* 'Sunset' fill the foreground with summer color. **Left:** Because it may become leggy after flowering, combine *C. argenteus* 'Silver Pink' with lower-growing, drought-tolerant perennials.

with the contrasting burgundy blotch," says Hogan. "These all shed at once and you have a couple of days with a wonderful carpet of petals under the plant."

DESIGN AND COMPANION PLANTS

Rockroses are most effective when used as components of a landscape that requires very little water and are best paired with plants similarly tolerant of drought. Simply plopping rockroses in among thirsty shrubs or perennials often produces a flush of unwanted growth and predisposes them to fungal diseases. "A common mistake is to place them within range of the sprinkler system," says Hogan.

Rockroses are not fond of repeated shearing or other forms of hard pruning either, so it's best to site them where they can be allowed to grow to their mature size with minimal shaping. "We tend to shear ours maybe once or twice a year," Hogan

says. "Some of them are semi-woody and with those you should leave a smidge of the previous year's growth when pruning to make them bushy."

In the dry border at Joy Creek Nursery, Horn says California muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) was the most successful companion because of its contrasting texture and habit. "Because most *Cistus* only come into their own for a brief period of time in June, I think you could use penstemons to carry on the bloom later in the season," says Horn.

POTENTIAL IN OTHER REGIONS

"I think there is great potential for rockroses in the inland, continental West where Mediterranean plants such as lavender often adapt well," says Panayoti Kelaidis, senior curator and director of outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens. According to Kelaidis, the garden has grown *C. lauri-*

folius, as well as high-altitude selections of *C. crispus*, *C. incanus*, and *C. creticus*. The last three, says Kelaidis, "make it through some years, but are often badly winter-burned. We trim them back, and they take off again, so they are potentially useful in our climate, but I suspect we will have to hybridize them with *C. laurifolius* to get really tough ones."

Horn agrees that future breeding and selection should focus on hardiness, as well as on extended bloom duration. "They have beautiful flowers already—what we should be looking for is repeat blooming and longer—or later—blooming," he says.

A community horticulturist with Oregon State University Extension Service, Neil Bell coordinates evaluations of landscape plants at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon.

Panayoti Kelaidis: Plant Explorer for Rocky Mountain Gardens

by Talia Goldman

PANAYOTI KELAIDIS travels all over the world, from Mexico to South Africa to China, on plant-hunting expeditions, but his passion for plants is rooted in his home state of Colorado. Growing up in Boulder with his father's love of the outdoors and the rock garden he built as a kid with his brother-in-law, Kelaidis's own fascination with alpinism and rock gardening blossomed. He has introduced many ornamental plants found during his travels that have become popular in American gardens, such as varieties of diascia (*Diascia* spp.) and ice plants (*Delosperma* spp.) from South Africa. But he has also found and introduced many plants native to the Colorado area, most notably a number of penstemons, including *Penstemon caespitosus* and *Penstemon crandallii*.



As senior curator and director of outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG), Kelaidis serves as a representative of the DBG's mission to promote the importance of using plants that are both attractive and adapt easily to the semi-arid conditions of the Rocky Mountain region. This is a message that Kelaidis carries to the public through his work at DBG and in his articles, books, and lectures. And the plants that he develops don't stay in the gardens at DBG, but are made available to home gardeners through Plant Select®, a joint plant introduction program of the DBG and Colorado State University (CSU) that he played a key role in establishing. In the process, Kelaidis has garnered numerous honors, including this year's AHS Liberty Hyde Bailey Award for his lifetime contributions to horticulture. Editorial Intern Talia Goldman talked with Kelaidis recently about gardening in the Rocky Mountain region and his search for suitable new ornamental plants to broaden the palette for home gardeners.

Talia Goldman: Having spent most of your life in Colorado, what do you like best about gardening in the Rocky Mountain region?

Panayoti Kelaidis: The wide range of growing conditions, which offers so many possibilities. The concentration of distinctively different microclimates in our region is much greater than any place else I have visited. Where else can you grow *Lithops* from hot and dry South Africa and *Meconopsis* from the moist shade of the Himalayas in the same garden? In my home garden, I have a bog of pitcher plants and bog primulas and an unwatered xeriscape with hundreds of kinds of cacti and agaves as well as a woodland garden with hepaticas, rhododendrons, and hellebores. The north side of our home is like Alaska, the south side like Arizona.



Delosperma 'Kelaidis' (Mesa Verde™) is a naturally occurring hybrid ice plant that was discovered in the late 1990s at Denver Botanic Garden and named for Kelaidis.

What are some of the ways you meet the challenge of gardening in a climate that receives little annual rainfall?

The principal concept I have learned from gardening in Colorado is to stop trying to change the type of soil I have to work with and to appreciate the natural conditions and grow what naturally does best in my climate. The number of spectacular plants suited to this climate is enormous.

You've introduced a lot of new non-native plants to the gardens at DBG. What is your view on the merits of these plants versus those of Colorado natives?

I have probably introduced three or four Colorado natives for every exotic I have launched. My role in promoting native plants and helping promulgate ways of growing them effectively has been un-



Left: Designed by Panayoti Kelaidis, the internationally acclaimed Rock Alpine Garden at DBG displays more than 2,000 native and non-native plant species suited to the Rocky Mountain region, including *Scabiosa lucida*, *Allium caeruleum*, and *Papaver rhoeas*. Above: Among Kelaidis's many native plant introductions is *Zauschneria garrettii*, which he discovered in Wyoming.

dervalued by the public at large. I think native plants are taken for granted because exotics just seem to have more pizzazz for the average Joe.

When did you begin traveling to search for plants and where did you go?

I collected seed and plants on trips to the Rockies as a child. My first “official” collecting trips were conducted in my 20s throughout Colorado and the West. These were with Professor T. Paul Maslin, a great biologist and gardener who lived a few blocks away from me in Boulder and who became my mentor. Our biggest trip together was in 1978 to the mountains and deserts of Chihuahua, Mexico, where we found the yellow, scarlet, and deep red Mexican *Phlox mesoleuca* forms we introduced into cultivation.

You’ve made numerous trips to South Africa. What is it about South Africa that appeals so much to you?

South Africa is twice the size of Texas yet contains more species of plants than all of North America north of Mexico. It has one out of 10 species of plants on Planet Earth—an amazing proportion of which are extremely ornamental. It’s a botanist’s paradise! I have no doubt that there are thousands of species of plants in South Africa—and elsewhere in the world—still to be discovered.

You have been very active in establishing the Plant Select® program. How did this program get started?

Plant Select® was started about 25 years ago when I was curator of the Rock Alpine Garden at DBG. It was a direct response to public interest in the flood of novel plants being displayed at the York Street Gardens of DBG and the Plant Environmental Research Center of CSU. So many visitors wanted to obtain these new plants that DBG and CSU decided to partner with the local green industry to find a way for these new plants to be systematically studied, propagated, and marketed.

It took about 10 years for the program to get off the ground. We started with eight wholesale growers from Colorado and Nebraska in 1997 selling a few hundred thousand plants. Now we have over 50 wholesale partners from coast to coast selling more than a million plants a year through nurseries and independent garden centers across America. We never dreamed that this program would have succeeded to the extent that it has. It has been a highlight of my professional life.

Why are regional plant introduction programs such as Plant Select® important to gardeners?

The same plants will simply not thrive everywhere the way that so many other aspects of our lives are standard everywhere.

You can have the same “box” stores in Hawaii and Maine, but plants can’t be made to conform. You can only truly succeed in gardening by bowing to the will of Mother Nature. By testing, publicizing, and making available plants that are proven to perform well in different regions, plant introduction programs benefit home gardeners who now have plants better suited to their gardens.

What is the single most important tip you want to give to gardeners in the Rocky Mountain region?

Get your pruning shears and cut up your garden hoses. Learn to garden without watering—or to water less. The most beautiful and exciting plants for our gardens are yet to come, and, when they do, they will die if watered too much.

How do you balance your time between your current responsibilities at DBG, plant hunting, and writing?

Plant hunting and writing are the focus of my professional life, along with lecturing and research. That is what I have done for a living for 29 years now. At DBG, I have over 100 colleagues. We all work together to achieve our ends: I am just one performer in a magnificent orchestra.

Talia Goldman is editorial intern for The American Gardener.

From Mild to Wild: Sensational Salsa Peppers

by Kris Wetherbee



'Early Jalapeno'



'Holy Mole'



'Hungarian Hot Wax'

WHEN I FIRST caught salsa fever a couple of decades ago, most recipes typically included only one type of pepper (*Capsicum annuum*), usually a jalapeno. Yet as a recipe developer, I knew there was more excitement to salsa than a single variety of pepper could provide. Great salsa incorporates a range of flavors and heat along with an aromatic sweetness. After having grown



'Corno di Toro'

(and tasted) nearly 50 varieties, I've discovered that there are hot peppers, there are sweet peppers, and then there's my favorite category—the one I refer to as salsa peppers, cream-of-the-crop peppers that bring out the best in any salsa recipe.

The following varieties are some salsa peppers worth considering (days to maturity are from their transplant date).

SWEET PEPPERS

Harvested immature, green peppers are somewhat bitter, but left to fully ripen, the fruit becomes colorful and sweet. Varieties that color up fast even in cooler climates include 'Gypsy' (58–60 days), 'Cubanelle' (65 days), and 'Giant Marconi' (63 days). 'Corno di Toro' (68 days) turns bright red or yellow and 'Banana Supreme' ripens from yellow to bright red in just 65 days.

MILDLY HOT

For flavor without burning heat, the slightly spicy, mild pungency of 'Anaheim' (75 days), 'Poblano' (75–80 days), and 'Mulato Isleno' (76 days) are sure to please. Standout short season selections include 'Spanish Spice' (63 days) and 'Early Jalapeno' (66 days). For something different, 'Holy Mole' (85 days) has full-bodied flavor without extreme heat, and 'Pasilla Bajio' (78 days) offers a fruity twist with just a hint of heat.

MEDIUM HOT

A pepper's heat comes from compounds known as capsaicinoids, which are mostly concentrated in the pepper's seeds and

membrane area. The Scoville Scale is a method for measuring a pepper's heat based on its capsaicinoid content. The degree of heat can vary wildly within varieties of the same type of pepper. Different varieties of jalapeno, for example, range from 2,500 to 10,000 Scoville units. Turn up the heat with

Planting Basics

GETTING STARTED

In most areas, peppers produce best when planted outdoors as transplants. To start your own, sow seeds indoors eight to 10 weeks before your last spring frost. Keep containers moist and warm. Transplant seedlings to individual four-inch pots when two sets of true leaves appear.

TRANSPLANT TO THE GARDEN

Gradually harden off seedlings before planting outdoors when night temperatures remain above 55 degrees.

SPACING

About 18 inches apart.

DAYS TO MATURITY

58 to 110+ days from transplanting, depending on variety.



fiery 'Mucho Nacho' (75 days), a jumbo-sized jalapeño with amazing yields and powerful taste. On the cooler end of the heat spectrum is 'Senorita' (60–70 days).

Also on my list of must-have medium-hot favorites is 'Hungarian Hot Wax' (60–80 days) and 'Mirasol' for its hint of fruitiness that heightens the flavor of fruit-inspired salsas.

MEDIUM TO MEDIUM-HOT WITH SPICY FLAVOR

Salsa is never complete without the zesty addition of a good, spicy pepper such as 'Mesilla' (85 days) or 'Garden Salsa' (73 days). Slightly hotter 'Serrano' (75 days) is



an easy-to-grow Mexican classic and combines the best of both worlds—profound flavor as well as unpretentious heat. Similar in appearance to a cayenne, thin-walled 'Kung Pao' (85 days) comes in at about 10,000 Scoville units.

FIERY HOT

If you consider yourself adventurous, ease into the burn with a fiery 'Long Red



Cayenne' (75 days), which scores from 30,000 to 55,000 Scoville units. Fan the flame with 'Thai Dragon' (70–80 days), a southeast Asian native said to be eight times hotter than a standard jalapeño. Want more heat? Any of the habaneros are undoubtedly worth the risk. Though small in size, they pack a potent dose of heat, tipping the Scoville Scale at 100,000 to 350,000. If you are truly fearless, try (cautiously) the tongue-scorching heat of 'Caribbean Red' (110+ days), a habanero that measures a blistering 445,000 Scoville units.

GROWING GUIDELINES

Heat-loving peppers need full sun, well-drained soil rich in organic matter, and a long, warm growing season in which to grow and thrive. The more sun and heat, the more pungent the peppers.

Floating row covers, hot caps, cloches, and cold frames help boost the surrounding temperature in regions with cool or short summers. You can also increase the heat around plant roots by mulching your soil with heat-absorbing black plastic or IRT mulch (infrared transmitting mulch). Habaneros and other long-season peppers may perform better if grown in containers set in the warmer air of a deck or open greenhouse. Where summers are excessively hot, cool things down with the help of a temporary lattice or shade cloth.

The ideal night temperature for pollination and fruit set is between 65 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Too much heat (above 90 degrees) or cool nights consistently below 60 degrees can cause blossoms to drop, resulting in reduced fruit set. If pollination is poor, tapping the flowers every

Sources

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, ME.
(877) 564-6697.
www.johnnyseeds.com.

Territorial Seed Company, Cottage Grove, OR. (800) 626-0866.
www.territorialseed.com.

Tomato Growers Supply Company, Fort Meyers, FL. (888) 478-7333.
www.tomatogrowers.com.

W. Atlee Burpee & Company, Warminster, PA. (800) 888-1447.
www.burpee.com.

Resources

The Edible Pepper Garden by Rosalind Creasy. Periplus Editions, Boston, Massachusetts, 2000.

The Pepper Garden by Dave Dewitt and Paul Bosland. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, California, 1993.

few days or hand pollinating with a small brush or cotton swab can increase fruit set.

Aged manure applied at planting time along with oyster shells for calcium produce the best peppers in my USDA Zone 7 Oregon garden. Once flowers appear, a side-dressing of compost or a quarter to half cup of complete organic fertilizer per plant will provide an additional boost. But go easy on the nitrogen—too much will result in lush plants but fewer fruits. Inadequate moisture causes low yield and bitter fruit; a two-inch layer of organic mulch, such as compost, helps retain soil moisture.

ENJOYING THE HARVEST

You can harvest peppers at any stage of growth, but the flavor and heat will not fully develop until after fruits change color and fully mature. Gently cut the stems with a knife or scissors to harvest fruits. Always use caution when handling hot peppers, because direct contact with the capsaicin can burn the skin and eyes. Peppers are a great source of Vitamins A and C.

Kris Wetherbee grows peppers and many other vegetables in her western Oregon garden.

Horticultural News and Research Important to American Gardeners

EDIBLE GARDENS A CAPITAL IDEA

For years, advocates of organic and locally grown food have campaigned for the creation of a vegetable garden at the White House in the hope that such a high profile example would encourage more Americans to plant edible gardens as well. Proponents argue that growing food closer to home will result in healthier eating habits and numerous other benefits such as reducing the amount of energy needed to transport food long distances.

The movement achieved its goal in March when First Lady Michelle Obama, with the assistance of a group of fifth-graders from Bancroft Elementary School in Washington, D.C., broke ground for a new kitchen garden on the South Lawn of the White House. The students also will help to plant, harvest, and cook the produce from the garden as the season progresses. The garden's bounty will be used to supply the White House kitchen and any extra produce will go to a local organization that serves the homeless.



Children from Bancroft Elementary School in Washington, D.C., help First Lady Michelle Obama to break ground for a new kitchen garden at the White House in March.

Another high profile vegetable garden will be planted in May at California's state capitol in Sacramento. The driving force for that garden is California's First Lady Maria Shriver. "This new garden will bring awareness to children, students, and visitors about the important role of food, where it comes from, nutritional value, how it is grown and harvested," says Shriver, "and ultimately how it reaches the tables of those who need it most," since local food banks will be beneficiaries of the harvested produce.

HOMEGROWN VEGETABLES FOR THE NEEDY

While everyone's busy starting edible gardens, the Garden Writers Association's Plant A Row for the Hungry (PAR) program encourages people to grow a little extra to donate to the needy.

This year, PAR is launching the GroGood pledge campaign, along with its partners, the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company and Feeding America. As part of the pledge, Scotts Miracle-Gro will donate

one million pounds of produce to food banks across the country. GroGood's goal is to double that donation with the help of Americans everywhere.

"The GroGood pledge to grow a garden for the greater good is an outstanding example of how we can work together to help Americans at risk for hunger," says cookbook author and GroGood spokesperson Katie Lee Joel, "one garden, one extra row, one pound of fresh produce at a time." If you'd like to



Katie Lee Joel

take the pledge to grow and donate produce to your local food bank, visit www.grogood.com or call (866) 466-3476.

PLANTS INSPIRE SOLAR TECHNOLOGY BREAKTHROUGH

Plants, algae, and certain bacteria have the ability to convert light from the sun into the energy they need to live, a process known as photosynthesis. Inspired by the mechanism behind photosynthesis, a team of scientists at the University of Southampton's School of Physics and Astronomy in the United Kingdom has now replicated the process to develop a new kind of photovoltaic cell that can more efficiently convert light into an electric current. "The possibilities for the application of this technology for environmentally-friendly energy production are very exciting," says Pavlos Lagoudakis, who headed the research group.

NEW DISCOVERIES ABOUT VANISHING HONEYBEES

Ever since beekeepers in the United States and abroad first reported in 2006 that large numbers of honeybees were disappearing from their hives, scientists have been scrambling to explain this mysterious affliction, dubbed colony col-

lapse disorder (CCD). What has everyone so concerned is that without domesticated honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) to pollinate plants, about a third of the world's crops would fail to produce.

In the April 2009 issue of *Scientific American*, researchers report that so far they have found several possible contributing causes rather than a single culprit. The CCD Working Team—made up of an interdisciplinary group of government, academic, and private scientists—has found that “multiple factors such as poor nutrition and exposure to pesticides can interact to weaken colonies and make them susceptible to a virus-mediated collapse.” The virus in question is the recently discovered Israeli acute paralysis virus, which appears to have a strong correlation with CCD.

Because such a variety of factors appear to play a role, CCD Working Team scientists assert that beekeepers can mitigate “colony loss by redoubling their efforts at improving their colonies’ diets, keeping infections and parasites in check, and practicing good hygiene.”



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This summer, six new ornamental annuals will put their best petals forward to secure your vote for the fairest flower in the land. The contestants will be grown at several public gardens across the country as part of the first American Garden Award competition, created by All-America Selections (AAS). While AAS coordinates impartial trials of new plants nationwide each year to select top-performing varieties, this award will be based on public opinion.

Vying for your vote are three dazzling petunias—‘Baby Duck Yellow’, ‘Opera Supreme Purple’, and Plush™ Lilac Pearl—along with bold TigerEye™ Gold black-eyed Susan, beguiling ‘Viper Orchid Halo’ catharanthus, and sparkling ‘Northern Lights Lavender’ pentas. You can cast your vote via a text message or toll free number before September 1. The votes will be tallied this fall and three winners will be announced next year. For more information and to see a live count of the voting, visit www.americangardenaward.org.

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BEST BELLFLOWERS FOR NORTHERN GARDENS

Earlier this year, the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois, released the results of an evaluation of hardy bellflowers conducted from 1998 to 2006. Out of 89 *Campanula* species and cultivars, *C. 'Sarastro'* was the only bellflower to earn the highest rating of five stars for its “compact habit, profusion of violet blue, tubular flowers, and winter hardiness.” This cultivar is thought to be a hybrid between *C. trachelium* and *C. punctata*, but rather than ex-



Campanula takesimana ‘Elizabeth’, top, and *C. poscharskyana* ‘Blue Waterfall’, above, are two cultivars that received high ratings in CBG’s evaluation.

hibiting the latter’s tendency to run aggressively, it is a well-behaved spreader. It is rated as hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 9 and heat tolerant in AHS Zones 8 to 1.

Thirty-one bellflower taxa received the next highest rating of four stars for “superior flower production while sustaining good health and habit quality for the duration of the trial.” Among these were *C.*

glomerata, *C. poscharskyana*, *C. rotundifolia*, and *C. takesimana*, as well as several of their cultivars. The high ratings for some of these—namely *C. glomerata* and *C. takesimana*—come with the caveat that they have “wide-spreading, rhizomatous habits,” meaning that the very qualities that helped them succeed in the trial could turn them into thugs in your garden. To view the complete results of the bellflower study and other plant evaluations, visit CBG’s website at www.cbg.org.

FISH EMULSION SUPPRESSES PLANT-ATTACKING FUNGI

Recent research by scientists at McGill University and the Southern Crop Protection and Food Research Centre in Canada has revealed that fish emulsion may have fungicidal properties in addition to being an effective plant fertilizer. According to a study published in the March 2009 issue of *Phytopathology*, the organic acids in fish emulsion proved toxic to both *Verticillium*, a common soil fungus that causes wilt, and *Pythium*, which causes damping-off in seedlings.

For *Verticillium*, after fish emulsion was applied to infested soil, the researchers observed that up to three quarters of the fungal spores were killed after one day and nearly all spores were killed after six days.

For *Pythium*, the researchers found that fish emulsion immediately suppressed damping-off in cucumber seedlings growing in a humus-rich muck soil and continued to do so for seedlings planted up to four weeks after the initial application. However, for cucumber seedlings growing in a peat-based mix, fish emulsion was effective only when seedlings were planted one to three weeks after the application.

PREDICTING INVASIVENESS

What turns a good plant bad? In the case of invasive non-natives, these are often plants that were introduced into the horticultural market for their flowers, foliage, or other desirable traits, but then escaped from gardens to become pernicious pests in natural areas. A study published in the January 2009 issue of *Ecology* found that the number of years a non-native plant is grown and sold in the horticulture industry has a strong correlation to its likelihood of naturalizing or

ORGANIC GARDENING SURVEY REVEALS CONFUSION AMONG CONSUMERS

While organically grown food has become fairly mainstream in recent years, moving from natural food stores to the shelves of supermarkets, organic gardening products have been slower to catch on. A recent survey by the Garden Writers Association, a trade group for garden communicators, reveals that the organic gardening movement is growing, but there is still considerable confusion about what “organic” means and whether organic lawn and garden products are as effective as conventional ones. Out of nearly 1,000 American households surveyed:

- 70% equate the term “organic” with being “costly to buy.”
- 26% think that “natural” products are not as good as organic products.
- 18% think natural products are the same as organic products but 52% do not equate natural products with organic products.
- 44% indicated a high level of interest in buying organic products in stores while 36% were interested in growing their own organic products.
- 31% indicated a strong interest in doing organic lawn care.
- 80% said they would use more organic products if they knew that they could get an effective result for no additional cost.
- 60% said that they would use more organic products if they could be convinced that organics are just as effective as non-organic products.
- 55% said that they would use organic products more if they could find them in a store.
- 53% said that they would use more organic products if they understood what to buy and how to use them.

PEOPLE and PLACES in the NEWS

America in Bloom Establishes New Memorial Award

America in Bloom (AIB), a national non-profit organization that promotes urban beautification, has created a new award in honor of AIB board member and officer John R. Holmes III, who died unexpectedly in February. Since 2002, Holmes also had been the CEO of OFA—an Association of Floriculture Professionals.



The John R. Holmes III Community Champion Award will be given to an individual who has “demonstrated a vision and selfless commitment to moving the community forward.” Candidates must come from a city that has participated or is participating in the AIB program. The first award will be presented during the 2009 AIB Symposium and Awards Program taking place from October 1-3 in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Nominations for the annual award are being accepted until July 1. Visit the AIB website at www.americainbloom.org or call (614) 487-1117 for more details.

becoming invasive. The study also identified several other factors that can help predict which plants will be wanderers and which will be well-behaved.

In an effort to identify naturalization patterns, Bob Pemberton with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service Invasive Plant Research Laboratory in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and his colleague Hong Liu, formerly with the University of Florida, analyzed 40 years of a prominent Florida nursery’s sales data starting with the year 1887. Comparing the data to known invasive non-native plants in Florida, they noticed that “plants that became invasive and naturalized were sold for an average of 19.6 and 14.8 years, respectively, compared to 6.8 years for non-naturalized plants, and the naturalization of plants sold for 30 years or more is 70 percent.”

Additionally, patterns in the data suggested that plants with large native ranges in their region of origin were more likely to naturalize, as compared to plants from smaller native ranges. In particular, vines and aquatic herbs showed the greatest tendency to naturalize, as did plants in certain families—the bindweed family (Convolvulaceae) and verbena family (Verbenaceae), for instance.

To help avoid the introduction of invasives through the horticulture industry, the researchers recommend developing better screening techniques to identify and select noninvasive species and varieties before putting them on the market.

JUNE IS PERENNIAL GARDENING MONTH

Since 2000, the Perennial Plant Association has designated June as Perennial Gardening Month. If you’re looking for a list of top performing perennials to try in your garden, the Columbus, Ohio-based organization annually selects a Perennial Plant of the Year based on ease of care, adaptability to a wide range of growing conditions, and several seasons of interest.



Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'

For 2009, this honor goes to *Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'*. This ornamental grass features low mounds of cascading, deciduous, golden foliage that add a splash of brightness to shady spots in the garden. It is hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 9 and is heat tolerant in AHS Zones 9 to 5. For more information, visit www.perennialplant.org.

News written by Associate Editor Viveka Neveln.

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Battling Weeds: A Multi-Pronged Approach

by Rita Pelczar

THE WAR AGAINST weeds never ends. For best results, approach weed control from several fronts. First, eliminate as many weeds as possible from the garden area prior to planting, then remove new weeds that appear before they become established. Other tactical options include using physical barriers to prevent weed emergence, preventing weed seed formation, and employing cultural practices that favor desirable plants. A number of tools and products are available to combat weeds—keep them at the ready to answer the call to arms. In some cases, herbicides may need to be considered as a last resort

EARLY ACTION

Think about weed control before you establish a new garden or bed. Annual weeds enter the garden as seeds introduced in purchased soil or mulch, or carried on the wind, in water, or introduced by animals. Some weed seeds can survive for decades in the soil. Cultivating a new bed or an annual flower or vegetable garden brings many weed seeds to the surface where, stimulated by light, they germinate. That's when to eliminate them. Repeated cultivation will bring more seeds to the surface, eventually depleting the existing weed bank.

Perennial weeds are more difficult since, in addition to producing seeds, most reproduce vegetatively. Remove their roots, runners, stolons, rhizomes, or bulbs as you work new soil. If perennial weeds



Using ground-covering plants as a living mulch is a good way to keep weeds at bay.

are a serious problem, consider soil solarization, a technique that requires full sun and warm weather. To solarize your soil, mow the existing vegetation very short or till it, then water it well and cover it with sheets of clear plastic, at least one-and-a-half millimeters thick, burying all sides of the plastic so that heat builds up beneath it. After about six weeks, most weeds and weed seeds in the upper several inches of



Smothering weeds with plastic sheeting is an effective way to kill perennial weeds and their seeds when creating new planting beds.

the soil will have been destroyed. The drawbacks of this procedure are that it prevents your use of the area for a significant part of the growing season and it destroys or reduces populations of many beneficial soil organisms. If perennial weeds are a serious issue, however, it may be worth the effort.

IMPROVING THE ODDS

Cultural practices that strengthen your desirable plants improve their odds in the battle for turf. Test your soil and supply the needed amendments to maintain the correct pH and fertility for the plants you want to grow. Water by hand or use drip irrigation so that water reaches your plants' roots rather than areas between where weeds might grow.

A healthy lawn is less apt to be overrun with weeds than one that is poorly maintained. Mow at the proper height for the type of turf you grow and be sure your blade is sharp. In general, it is better to mow high and often—longer grass blades help shade the soil, preventing weed seeds from germinating. Frequent



Landscape fabrics such as Weed Shield®, seen above, can be secured to beds with pins.

mowing also suppresses the development of weed seeds.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Since many weed seeds need light to germinate, covering the soil with an organic, weed-free mulch thwarts their emergence. Enhance the barrier by spreading a layer of newspaper beneath the mulch. In vegetable gardens, black plastic can be used between rows, particularly with heat loving crops such as tomato and cucumber; it prevents weed seed germination and warms the soil. Mulches provide the additional benefit of conserving soil moisture.

Woven or spun landscape fabrics are effective mulches, and they are available in different grades, depending on their intended use. **DeWitt's Weed Barrier®** is available in varying strengths and colors—black, gray, and brown—so that it blends with the mulching material used to cover it. Last year, I used Weed Barri-



Mulching with straw or other organic materials suppress weeds and conserves moisture.

er to mulch my bed of pumpkins and butternut squash. Although the fabric is permeable to air and moisture, it thwarted the weeds—my pumpkins and squash produced famously. Use a heavier grade of landscape fabric when constructing a walkway. It significantly reduces weed emergence through mulch or gravel or between pavers, brick, or stone.

Spacing plants so that they quickly cover the soil without crowding each

other creates a living mulch. Groundcovers planted beneath trees and shrubs and low spreading annuals or perennials that blanket the ground in a flowerbed accomplish much the same thing. In a vegetable garden, planting multiple, closely spaced rows or blocks minimizes the area left open for weeds. Or construct raised beds for intensive vegetable plantings; walkways between beds can be mulched or maintained as mowed turf.

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

Despite efforts to prevent weeds in the garden, they will come. Be ready with tools to attack the problem while weeds are small and vulnerable.

A variety of long-handled weeders make short work of annual weeds. A **loop or scuffle hoe** and the **Circlehoe®**, both available from Rittenhouse Garden Tools, are great for slicing through weeds at or just below ground level. These tools allow soil to pass through their open blades, creating minimal disturbance. The **Master Gardener Cultivator and Hoe** from Ames True Temper has a dual use head with both a flat blade and



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Sources

Ames True Temper, Camp Hill, PA.
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www.amestruetemper.com.

Clean Air Gardening, Dallas, TX.
(214) 370-0530.
www.cleanairgardening.com.

DeWitt Company, Sikeston, MO.
(573) 472-0048.
www.dewittcompany.com.

The Espoma Company, Millville, NJ.
(888) 377-6621. www.espoma.com.

Gardens Alive, Lawrenceburg, IN.
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Lee Valley Garden Tools, Ogdensburg, NY. (800) 871-8158.
www.leevalley.com.

Nature's Avenger, Buford, GA.
(866) 906-WEED.
www.naturesavenger.com.

Pharm Solutions, Inc., Port Townsend, WA. (805) 927-7500.
www.pharmsolutions.com.

Planet Natural, Bozeman, MT. (800) 289-6656. www.planetnatural.com.

Rittenhouse Garden Tools, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. (877) 488-1914. www.rittenhouse.ca.

Shade Cloth Store, Libertyville, IL.
(866) 727-6658.
www.shadeclothstore.com.

Resources

The Gardener's Weed Book: Earthsafe Controls by Barbara Pleasant. Storey Publishing, North Adams, Massachusetts, 1996.

Non-Toxic Weed Control by William Quarles. "Common Sense Quarterly." www.birc.org/Winter2003.pdf.



Lee Valley Tools' Japanese draw hoe

forked cultivator. The **Japanese draw hoe** from Lee Valley Tools is a heavier tool that comes in handy for tackling large weed stems and roots.

Clean Air Gardening offers several options for detail weeding, including **Cape Cod weeders** with steel heads and hardwood handles for both right-handed and left-handed gardeners. Its fishtail and precision weeders are rustproof cast aluminum and are great for tight spaces. For those tenacious, deep rooted weeds, the



The Cobrahead features a curved neck.

CobraHead® weeder offers a narrow, heavy-duty steel blade and a handle made of recycled plastic that has a very comfortable grip.

String trimmers are great for cutting the weeds along fences and uncultivated areas; their regular use reduces the spread of weeds by preventing seed formation. Black & Decker's cordless **High Performance String Trimmer** is lightweight and powerful with a 36 volt rechargeable battery.

Flamers or weed torches are useful for eradicating weeds in a garden, between pavers in a walkway, and spot weeding in lawns. Just know that you'll have black circles on the lawn for a few



Black & Decker's high-performance cordless string trimmer, left, and a weed torch from Rittenhouse, below



weeks! Persistent weeds may require several treatments. Don't use a flamer near mulch or other flammable material.

HERBICIDES

Although chemical warfare should be a last resort, there are several herbicides derived from plant oils or fatty acids that do not persist in the environment. The active ingredient in **Nature's Avenger Organic Weed Killer** is citrus oil; in **Weed Pharm**, a non-selective weed and grass killer, the active ingredient is vinegar (acetic acid); Espoma's **Earth-Tone® 4n1 Weed Control** contains a synthetic anti-sprouting agent. **Weed Aside™** is an herbicidal soap. These products are most effective on young annual weeds; perennial weeds may require repeated applications.



Espoma's Earth-Tone 4n1 Weed Control

Sold under a variety of brand names, corn gluten meal, a byproduct of corn processing, acts as a pre-emergent herbicide. It kills germinating seeds, so timing of its application is critical for successful weed control. For all of the above products, follow the label directions carefully.

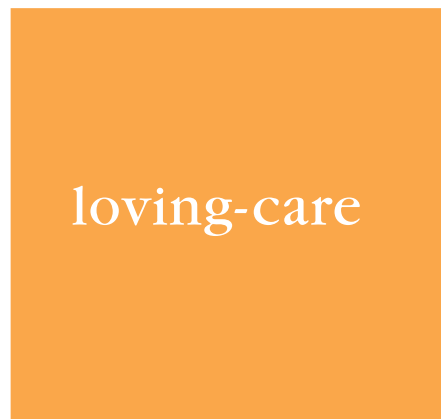
Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.



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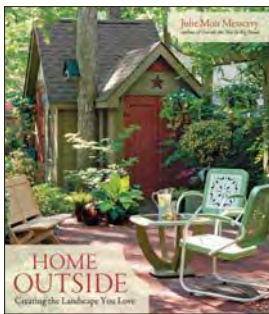
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Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

Home Outside: Creating the Landscape You Love

Julie Moir Messervy. The Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut, 2009. 249 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$30.

GARDEN DESIGN is often an enigma to homeowners. While they seldom hesitate to spend time and money on interior design, they just can't quite make the leap of faith to put the same effort into designing the great outdoors.



In her latest book, celebrated landscape designer Julie Moir Messervy explains how any property owner can create “a welcoming front yard, a backyard that feels like an oasis, a place outside to entertain, a contemplative area, and a way to ‘flow’ effortlessly through-

out the house and landscape.” The book is a road map that can help you turn your property, whatever its size, into a second home that’s just outside the doorstep.

In an easy-to-follow, six-part process, Messervy reveals many of the techniques that landscape designers use to turn pedestrian properties into exceptional havens where owners can enjoy the solitude, commune with nature, hang out with family and friends, or entertain business associates. She leads you through the process of selecting materials; choosing plants for color, texture, and impact; making the most of your front yard; building on what you already have; framing the focal points, and even designing the garden to better match your personality.

The book is filled with “before and after” photos, drawings, and landscape plans that clearly illustrate all of the key concepts she wishes to convey. Sections like “Working on a Shoestring” and “Landscaping in Phases” describe in detail how homeowners with modest budgets can have gardens as impressive as those on grand estates.

In the final chapter, Messervy presents a case study of a small property to demonstrate the book’s main ideas. She walks you step-by-step through all the methods used by landscape architect Nick Cavaliere to fashion an outdoor space that looks just like a cottage in the woods and is the “perfect size for his active lifestyle.” As Messervy says, “the owner of this house was able—over time—to transform a nondescript landscape into his own true pleasure ground.” With the help of this book, anyone will be able to do the same.

—Jane Berger

Jane Berger is a landscape designer based in Washington, D.C. and the publisher of www.gardendesignonline.com.

Sunflowers: The Secret History

Joe Pappalardo. The Overlook Press, Woodstock, New York, 2008. 256 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$22.95.

IT'S NOT OFTEN that a single-topic horticulture book can spur much interest beyond those who love the plant. However, confessed sunflower stalker Joe Pappalardo packs much more than the botanical aspects into what he calls “the unauthorized biography of the world’s most beloved weed.” The author’s fascination with his subject—from the flower head’s logarithmic spiral (the most efficient way to pack the maximum number of seeds in an area) to bits of history such as the sunflower’s role in Hitler’s invasion of Russia during World War II—is reflected in his engaging prose. The reader can’t help but be drawn in as Pappalardo paints a compelling picture of just how integral sunflowers are to our everyday lives.



A veteran science journalist, the author applied the same research skills he’s used at *Popular Mechanics*, the Smithsonian’s *Air & Space* magazine, and *Time* to uncover a wealth of sunflower science and lore. His obsessive research revealed that these plants can “lay legitimate claim to participation in all sorts of historical events and the actions of all kinds of famous characters.” For example, Pappalardo relates how NASA used sunflowers to prove one of Charles Darwin’s theories in Spacelab during the 1960s and how Osama bin Laden used sunflowers to fund al-Qaeda.

The book also brings the unsung heroes and behind-the-scenes characters into the light. These include many of the Sunflower People, as he calls them, “those who have dedicated their lives to the plant.” Among these are plant hunters stalking rare species, and scientists at the United States Department of Agriculture working to track down, catalog, store, and preserve more than 3,000 sunflower species.

If you are a science, history, or trivia junkie, this book is for you. Add the horticultural component, and any plant lover will enjoy this “sunflower’s-eye view of humanity,” despite the lack of photography aside from a few grainy, black-and-white photos. Therein lies my only complaint about the book, but it did not outweigh my appreciation for Pappalardo’s captivating, well-documented research and breezy, easy-to-absorb writing style.

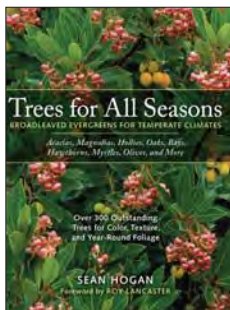
—Doreen G. Howard

Doreen G. Howard, avowed plant nerd, trivia buff, and former garden editor at *Woman’s Day*, writes for a number of publications and experiments with plant breeding in Roscoe, Illinois.

Trees for All Seasons: Broadleaved Evergreens for Temperate Climates

Sean Hogan. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2008. 336 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$39.95.

AN AVERAGE USDA Zone 5/6 gardener might find this new book frustrating, but for an adventurous Zone 5/6 gardener like



me, this book will inspire you to try more of these beauties in that proverbial "protected spot." Personally I love it when a group of plants that might be side-tracked gets a new and thorough treatment such as this book offers. Some may assume it is filled with rhododendrons and related plants, but these are intentionally omitted. Unfortunately palms, bamboos, and yuccas that might otherwise belong are also omitted; still,

more than 300 trees are presented, most with color photographs.

The author, Sean Hogan, and his partner, Parker Sanderson, are the co-owners of Cistus Nursery near Portland, Oregon, where they have trialed and offered many of the trees in this book. If you are fortunate enough to garden in the great arc that runs from the mid-Atlantic states across the south and up to the coastal Washington State/British Columbia border (roughly USDA Hardiness Zone 7 and warmer), this book will open your eyes to possibilities for a greener winter garden. Even experienced, mild-temper-

ate gardeners will find worthwhile discoveries here. "Indeed, it is the challenging, throw-down-the-gauntlet nature of this book," states plantsman Roy Lancaster in the foreword, "that makes it so exciting for gardeners, wherever they may garden."

You will find some surprise entries among those listed in the book's subtitle: "Acacias, Magnolias, Hollies, Bays, Hawthorns, Myrtles, Olives, Oaks, and More." Examples among familiar genera such as *Magnolia* and *Quercus* include some newly available Chinese magnolias (formerly in the genera *Mangletia*, *Michelia*, and others) such as *M. champaca* and *M. compressa* with intensely fragrant flowers or the gigantic *M. yunnanensis*. Of course, space is provided for the more common *M. grandiflora* and *M. virginiana* and all varieties include some specific growing tips. Similarly the represented oaks range from common live oaks and cork oaks to new varieties from China and Mexico.

If you have been tempted to try something possibly tender, but still potentially growable, this is the book to compare the merits of old and new *Acacia* species, evergreen *Prunus*, and a gold mine of *Eucalyptus*. There are even tips for the notoriously touchy, but much drooled-over Chilean flame tree (*Embothrium coccineum*). If global warming is inevitable, as it seems, this book may provide the proverbial silver lining for cool-climate gardeners.

—Jim W. Waddick

Jim W. Waddick has written books devoted to irises, peonies, and bananas. A two-time medal-winner from the American Iris Society, he tries to garden in the difficult climate of Kansas City, Missouri.

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Edible Gardening

VEGETABLE SEED SALES are breaking records and even the White House now features a kitchen garden. No doubt about it, edible gardening is all the rage these days. As well it should be, considering that growing your own food can provide some of the freshest produce you'll ever eat, and can even be a lot of fun. You can also grow interesting and tasty varieties otherwise unavailable in the grocery store. Whether you have been cultivating edible plants for years or are new to the colorful world of vegetables, fruits, and herbs, the following recently published books are sure to provide insight and inspiration.

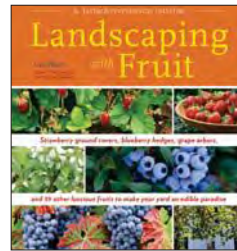
Even a tiny patch of ground or a couple of containers on a deck can yield surprisingly bountiful results. If you're dubious, *Fresh Food from Small Spaces* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008, \$24.95) will set you straight. This practical guide explains how to squeeze all you can from every available square inch because, as author and life-long city-dweller R. J. Ruppenthal puts it, "no space is too small or too dark to raise food." Granted the darkest spots may only be good for cultivating edible mushrooms or setting up a worm composting system, but this book contains plenty of other ideas for making the most of the smallest of spaces. For example, it describes how to take advantage of vertical space and zeros in on compact varieties—particularly those that will produce in low light conditions.

The Backyard Homestead (Storey Publishing, 2009, \$18.95), edited by Carleen Madigan, also makes a compelling case for the abundance a modest amount of space can produce. Aimed more at those who garden on an average-sized suburban plot than land-strapped city folk, this book proclaims that on a mere quarter of an acre, you can come pretty close to self-sufficiency. It covers a variety of techniques for intensively growing vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains, along with foraging from nature and raising livestock.

You'll also find recipes, preservation information, and other tips for enjoying your harvest. Pithy sidebars, charts, lists, and line drawings offer further instruction and help to break the breezy text into bite-sized chunks.

Edible plants not only provide nourishment, they also bring a range of colors, textures, scents, and forms to a garden. In *Landscaping with Fruit* (Storey Publishing, 2009, \$19.95), Lee Reich points out that most fruit-bearing plants—unlike annual vegetables—can contribute ornamental interest for years,

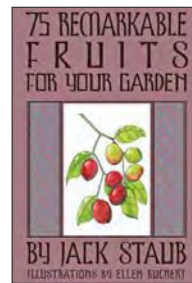
paying a double dividend when carefully incorporated into a garden's design. This book delves into how to do just that.



Chapters on landscape design basics, planting considerations, and cultural requirements precede an "encyclopedia" of fruit plants, which Reich selected for their ease of culture in temperate climates, ornamental value, and tastiness of fruits. Each plant's listing includes a general description as well as information about its growing

needs, seasons of interest, recommended varieties, and harvest tips. Colorful photographs, illustrations, and landscape plans round out the book.

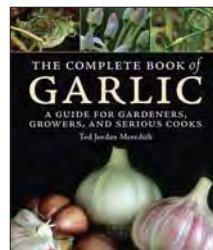
You'll find many more fruity options in *75 Remarkable Fruits for Your Garden* by Jack Staub (Gibbs Smith, 2008, \$19.95).



Heirlooms and modern hybrids, North American natives and exotics all make appearances, with Staub taking pains to include the "best of the current batch of available cultivars in every case." Rather than a manual on how to grow these plants, this book is more of a collection of essays that mingles historical tidbits and lore with growing tips and droll anecdotes to give readers a tantalizing taste of each fruit. Every

plant is also beautifully rendered in watercolor illustrations by Ellen Sheppard Buchert. Fans will want to seek out Staub's similar volumes on vegetables and herbs as well.

For something on one specific edible plant, there's the *Complete Book of Garlic* (Timber Press, 2008, \$39.95) by Ted Jordan Meredith. Garlic is beloved the world over for its culinary and medicinal uses, and this 330-page tome will help you truly appreciate all this pungent bulb has to offer. Meredith asserts that if your only experience with garlic is the mediocre grocery store variety, you have been missing out. Happily, garlic grows well in a wide range of climates and conditions, so he recom-



mends giving some of the many cultivars in the book a try in your garden. The book details cultivation as well as preparation methods for getting the most out of garlic's flavor and medicinal properties. Botany buffs will enjoy the chapters on natural history, garlic structures and their functions, and taxonomy. Dozens of large color photos throughout the book help to illustrate the diversity of garlic and its subtle beauty.

—Viveka Neveln, Associate Editor

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REGIONAL HAPPENINGS

Horticultural Events from Around the Country

NORTHEAST

CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT

RAP MAY 23. **Plant Sale.** Polly Hill Arboretum. West Tisbury, Massachusetts. (508) 693-9426. www.pollyhillarboretum.org.

RAP MAY 30 & 31. **Native Plant Sale.** Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. Boothbay, Maine. (207) 633-4333. www.maine-gardens.org.

RAP MAY 31–SEPT. 6. **Wicked Plants.** Exhibit. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Brooklyn, New York. (718) 623-7200. www.bbg.org.

JUNE 6. **HerbFest.** Connecticut Herb Association. Pleasant View Farms. Somers, Connecticut. (860) 763-5206. www.herb-fest.com.

RAP JUNE 10. **Landscape History of Martha's Vineyard.** Lecture. Polly Hill Arboretum. West Tisbury, Massachusetts. (508) 693-9426. www.pollyhillarboretum.org.

JUNE 11. **Life's Little Pleasures.** Garden tours. Garden Education Center of Greenwich. Cos Cob, Connecticut. (203) 869-9242. www.gecgreenwich.org.

RAP JUNE 20. **Summer Solstice Composting.** Workshop. Queens Botanical Garden. Flushing, New York. (718) 886-3800. www.queensbotanical.org.

JUNE 26–28. **The Newport Flower Show.** Newport, Rhode Island. (401) 847-1000. www.newportflowershow.org.

Looking ahead

RAP JULY 22. **Living Sculpture Conference.** Cornell Plantations. Ithaca, New York. (607) 255-2400. www.plantations.cornell.edu.

MID-ATLANTIC

PA, NJ, VA, MD, DE, WV, DC

MAY 23. **Knowing Native Plants: Flowering Shrubs.** Lecture and tour. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. New Hope, Pennsylvania. (215) 862-2924. www.bhwp.org.

RAP MAY 23–JUNE 17. **Art Blooms: Satsuki Azalea Bonsai.** Exhibit. U.S. National Arboretum. Washington, D.C. (202) 544-8733. www.usna.usda.gov.

Events sponsored by or including official participation by AHS or AHS staff members are identified with the **AHS** symbol.

Events hosted by botanical gardens and arboreta that participate in AHS's Reciprocal Admissions Program are identified with the **RAP** symbol. Current AHS members showing a valid membership card are eligible for free or discounted admission to the garden or other benefits. Special events may not be included; contact the host site for details or visit www.ahs.org/events/reciprocal_events.htm.

MAY 27. **Hummingbird Container.** Workshop. Brookside Gardens. Wheaton, Maryland. (301) 962-1400. www.brooksidegardens.org.

MAY 30. **Native Orchids of Virginia.** Lecture. Monticello. Charlottesville, Virginia. (434) 984-9822. www.monticello.org.

RAP MAY 31. **Wetlands Are Wonderlands.** Family workshop. Adkins Arboretum. Ridgely, Maryland. (410) 634-2847. www.adkinsarboretum.org.

RAP JUNE 6–SEPT. 27. **Totally Terrific Treehouses.** Exhibit. Tyler Arboretum. Media, Pennsylvania. (610) 566-9134. www.tylerarboretum.org.

RAP JUNE 13. **Herb Gardening in Containers.** Workshop. Green Spring Gardens. Alexandria, Virginia. (703) 642-5173. www.greenspring.org.

RAP JUNE 20. **Richmond Area Daylily Show and Sale.** Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Richmond, Virginia. (804) 262-9887. www.lewisginter.org.

Looking ahead

JULY 17. **Woody Plant Conference.** Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. (610) 328-8025. www.scottarboretum.org.

SOUTHEAST

AL, FL, GA, KY, NC, SC, TN

RAP MAY 2–OCT. 31. **Moore in America.** Sculpture exhibition. Atlanta Botanical Garden. Atlanta, Georgia. (404) 876-5859. [www.atlantabotanicalgarden.org](http://www atlantabotanicalgarden.org).

RAP MAY 20. **Essential Herbs—Basil and Beyond.** Demonstration. Aldridge Botanical Gardens. Hoover, Alabama. (205) 682-8019. www.aldridgegardens.com.

MAY 21. **Forest Dwellers.** Hike. The South Carolina Botanical Garden. Clemson University. Clemson, South Carolina. (864) 656-3311. www.clemson.edu/scbg.

MAY 23. **Azalea Propagation Workshop.** Callaway Gardens. Pine Mountain, Georgia. (706) 663-2281. www.callawaygardens.org.

RAP MAY 23. **Composting Workshop.** Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden. Belmont, North Carolina. (704) 825-4490. www.dsb.org.

MAY 30. **Daylily Show and Sale.** Chatahoochee Valley Daylily Society. Callaway Gardens. Pine Mountain, Georgia. (800) 225-5292. www.callawayonline.com.

RAP JUNE 11. **Garden Design Workshop.** Yew Dell Gardens. Crestwood, Kentucky. (502) 241-4788. www.yewdellgardens.org.

RAP JUNE 13. **Gardening for Wildlife.** Class. Atlanta Botanical Garden. Atlanta, Georgia. (404) 876-5859. www.atlantabotanicalgarden.org.

RAP JUNE 20. **Compost Happens.** Workshop. Florida Botanical Gardens. Largo, Florida. (727) 582-2200. www.flbg.org.

Looking ahead

JULY 9–11. **Mountains in Bloom.** Festival. The Bascom. Highlands, North Carolina. (828) 526-4949. www.thebascom.org.

JULY 22–25. **Cullowhee Conference: Native Plants in the Landscape.** Western Carolina University. Cullowhee, North Carolina. (864) 878-1786. <http://nativeplantconference.wcu.edu>.

NORTH CENTRAL

IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI

MAY 23. **Plant Sale.** Belle Isle Botanical Society. Detroit, Michigan. (313) 331-7760. www.bibsociety.org.

RAP MAY 23 & 24. **Western Reserve Herb Society Plant Sale.** Cleveland Botanical

Garden. Cleveland, Ohio. (216) 721-1600.
www.cbgbgarden.org.

MAY 30. **Back in Thyme.** Garden tour. Heck-Hasler House. Franklin, Indiana. (317) 784-5671. E-mail: jlrobertson@ameritech.net.

RAP JUNE 5-7. **Garden Fair.** Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Rockford, Illinois. (815) 965-8146. www.klehm.org.

RAP JUNE 6. **Waterosity.** Exhibit. Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Chaska, Minnesota. (952) 443-1400. www.arboretum.umn.edu.

JUNE 20. **Rose Festival and Iowa Rose Society Annual Rose Show.** Reiman Gardens. Iowa State University. Ames, Iowa. (515) 294-2710. www.reimangardens.iastate.edu.

RAP JUNE 21. **Rose Show.** Madison Rose Society. Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Madison, Wisconsin. (608) 246-4550. www.olbrich.org.

RAP JUNE 27. **Identifying Trees Using Leaves.** Class. The Brenton Arboretum. Dallas Center, Iowa. (515) 992-4211. www.thebrentonarboretum.org.

Looking ahead

JULY 11-14. **OFA Short Course.** Association of Floriculture Professionals. Trade show, workshops, exhibits. Columbus, Ohio. (614) 487-1117. www.ofa.org.

SOUTH CENTRAL

AR, KS, LA, MO, MS, OK, TX

MAY 21-24. **Louisiana Master Gardeners State Conference.** New Orleans, Louisiana. (504) 838-1170. E-mail: img09@agcenter.lsu.edu.

RAP MAY 23. **Plants of Coastal Mississippi.** Guided tour. Crosby Arboretum. Picayune, Mississippi. (601) 799-2311. www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu.

RAP MAY 23. **Rose Pests & Disease Control.** Lecture. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. Corpus Christi, Texas. (361) 852-2100. www.stxbot.org.

MAY 23. **Wildflower Identification and Ecology.** Class. Shaw Nature Reserve. Gray Summit, Missouri. (636) 451-3512. www.shawnature.org.

RAP MAY 30. **Shear Appeal Workshop.** Garvan Woodland Gardens. Hot Springs, Arkansas. (501) 262-9300. www.garvangardens.org.

RAP JUNE 14. **Grand Opening of the Heartland Harvest Garden.** Powell Gardens. Kingsville, Missouri. (816) 697-2600. www.powellgardens.org.

Sensory Garden Opens at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

ONE OF THE NEWEST public gardens in the country, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens (CMBG) in Boothbay has been rapidly expanding its programs and garden areas since it opened in 2007.

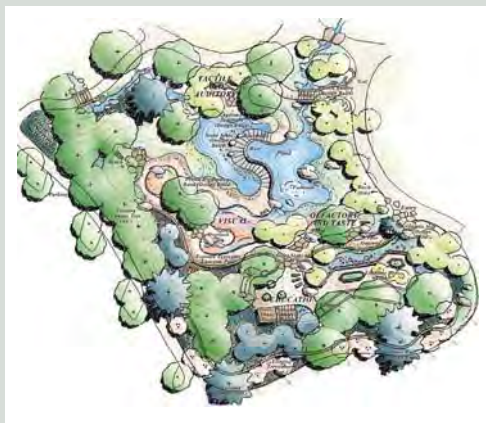
This June will bring the next step in the gardens' development with the completion of the Lerner Garden of the Five Senses. Intended to be a "sensory extravaganza," this new one-acre garden located near the main entrance is designed to engage all of the senses.

The idea for a sensory garden was conceived several years ago by active CMBG members Mollie and Wells Moore. When Mollie suddenly lost her sight, the Moores and a large group of volunteers started researching the best ways to make such a garden a reality. Landscape architect Herb Schaal and his team from ED&AW, based in Fort Collins, Colorado, created a master plan for the garden that will allow visually impaired and other disabled people to experience and enjoy it—and even, thanks to the Moores' research into creative methods, to help plant the garden.

Each of the five senses is celebrated in a separate section, and the sections blend together through pathways and bridges over waterways. Visitors will be able to touch plants of different textures, smell the fragrance of blooming flowers, hear the waterfalls, taste the edible fruits, flowers, and herbs—and of course, see the ornamental beauty of the garden and all its plantings.

Opening festivities for the garden will take place on June 19, as part of CMBG's Garden Fair weekend. Roger Swain, a long-time host of PBS's "The Victory Garden," will be one of the speakers. Call (207) 633-4333 or visit www.mainegardens.org for more information about the Lerner Garden of the Five Senses and CMBG's other attractions.

—Talia Goldman, Editorial Intern



CMBG's new sensory garden opens June 19.

JUNE 23-27. **APGA Annual Conference.** American Public Gardens Association. Missouri Botanical Garden. St. Louis, Missouri. (314) 577-5100. www.mobot.org.

Looking ahead

JULY 19-24. **Perennial Plant Symposium and Trade Show.** St. Louis, Missouri. (614) 771-8431. www.perennialplant.org.

SOUTHWEST

AZ, NM, CO, UT

RAP MAY 23. **Composting Basics.** Class. Red Butte Garden and Arboretum. Salt Lake City, Utah. (801) 581-4747. www.redbuttegardens.org.

RAP MAY 30. **Harvesting Rainwater for Gardening.** Class. The Arboretum at Flagstaff. Flagstaff, Arizona. (928) 774-1442. www.thearb.org.

RAP MAY 30. **Wild Mountain Gardening Expedition Workshop.** Denver Botanic Gardens. Westcliffe, Colorado. (720) 865-3500. www.botanicgardens.org.

JUNE 5 & 6. **Weird Plant Sale.** Tucson Botanical Garden. Tucson, Arizona. (520) 326-9686. www.tucsonbotanical.org.

RAP JUNE 6. **Colorado Water Garden Society Show and Sale.** Hudson Gardens & Events Center. Littleton, Colorado. (970) 245-9030. www.hudsongardens.org.

RAP JUNE 18. **Green Roofs for the West.** Symposium. Denver Botanic Gardens. Denver, Colorado. (720) 865-3500. www.botanicgardens.org.

WEST COAST

CA, NV, HI

RAP MAY 21. **Beautiful Gardening with**

Waterwise Plants. Guided tour. UC Botanical Garden. Berkeley, California. (510) 643-2755. <http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu>.

RAP MAY 30 & 31. **Herb Weekend.** Fullerton Arboretum. Fullerton, California. (714) 278-3407. www.fullertonarboretum.org.

RAP JUNE 6. **Flora and Ecology of the Oak Woodland.** Guided tour. Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Santa Barbara, California. (805) 682-4726. www.sbbg.org.

JUNE 7. **Full Moon Walk.** Quarryhill Botanical Garden. Glen Ellen, California. (707) 996-3166. www.quarryhillbg.org.

JUNE 8. **The Garden as Companion.** Presentation. San Diego Horticultural Society. San Diego, California. (760) 295-7089. www.sdhortsoc.org.

JUNE 11. **Unraveling the Mysteries of Botanical Latin.** Lecture. Friendship Auditorium. Southern California Horticultural Society. Los Angeles, California. (818) 567-1496. www.socalhort.org.

JUNE 13. **Green Gardener—Preserving Your Harvest.** Class. The Springs Preserve. Las Vegas, Nevada. (702) 822-7700. www.springspreserve.org.

JUNE 27 & 28. **Plant Show & Sale.** Culver City Garden Club. Culver City, California. (310) 203-1482.

NORTHWEST

AK, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY

RAP MAY 27. **A Passion for Penstemons.** Class. Idaho Botanical Garden. Boise, Idaho. (208) 343-8649. www.idahobotanicalgarden.org.

MAY 30. **Eco-Logical Garden: Practical Permaculture.** Workshop. Berry Botanic Garden. Portland, Oregon. (503) 636-4112. www.berrybot.org.

MAY 30. **Organic Gardening Workshop.** Portland Japanese Garden. Portland, Oregon. (503) 223-1321. www.japanesegarden.com.

JUNE 5 & 6. **Hardy Fern Foundation Fern Festival and Sale.** University of Washington Botanic Gardens. Seattle, Washington. (206) 543-8616. www.hardyferns.org.

JUNE 10. **Success with Succulents.** Lecture. Northwest Horticultural Society. University of Washington Botanic Gardens Center for Urban Horticulture. Seattle, Washington. (206) 527-1794. www.northwesthort.org.

RAP JUNE 11. **An Evening with Amy Stewart.** Lecture. Washington Park Arboretum. Seattle, Washington. (206) 325-4510.

Oregon Coast Gardening & Landscaping Expo

AFTER ITS SUCCESSFUL launch last year that attracted hundreds of people, the Oregon Coast Gardening & Landscaping Expo is returning to Newport, Oregon, on June 26 and 27. More than 50 vendors from the area will be selling a wide variety of plants, as well as gardening tools, garden art, and other supplies. Experts will be on site at the Master Gardener Center to answer gardening questions, and the expo's tool sharpening station will be available to revive old pruners, shovels, and other tools.

The expo, titled "Gardening on the Edge 2009," will feature 10 seminars presented by some of the leading experts in northwestern horticulture, including Mike Darcy, host of Portland's *In the Garden* radio show, and Marianne Binetti, a garden columnist for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and noted author. Topics will range from inexpensive gardening projects to methods to caring for specific types of plants and garden design. In addition to being a place of shopping and learning, the expo will be a place of relaxation, thanks to the Hospitality Garden Room hosted by the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, which will feature free refreshments along with information about local garden clubs.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Samaritan House Family Homeless Shelter in Lincoln County, Oregon. For more details, call (541) 270-0892 or visit www.oregoncoastgardeningexpo.com.

—Talia Goldman, Editorial Intern



Along with gardening seminars, the Oregon Coast Gardening & Landscaping Expo will feature dozens of vendors offering plants and garden-related merchandise.

www.arboretumfoundation.org.

RAP JUNE 13. **Basic Vegetable Gardening.** Talk and tour. Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. Cheyenne, Wyoming. (307) 637-6458. www.botanic.org.

RAP JUNE 20 & 21. **Garden Fair and Art Show.** Alaska Botanical Garden. Anchorage, Alaska. (907) 770-3692. www.alaskabg.org.

RAP JUNE 30. **Food and Identity in Early Idaho.** Lecture. Idaho Botanical Garden. Boise, Idaho. (208) 343-8649. www.idahobotanicalgarden.org.

Looking ahead

JULY 17–19. **Annual Montana Native Plant Society Meeting.** Hungry Horse, Montana. www.mtnativeplants.org.

CANADA

MAY 24. **Plant Detectives: The Mystery of the Stolen Pollen.** Family program. Van-Dusen Botanical Garden. Vancouver, British Columbia. (604) 878-9274. www.vandusengarden.org.

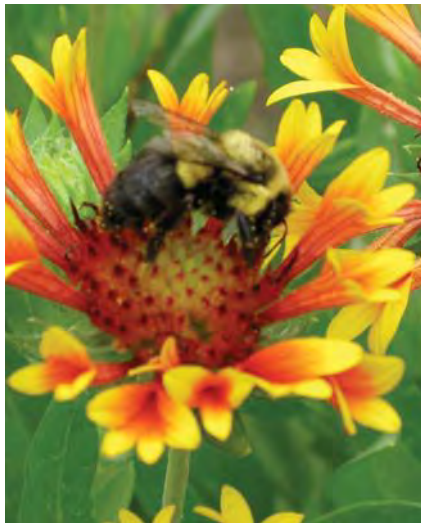
RAP JUNE 13. **Summer Pruning Workshop.** Royal Botanical Gardens. Hamilton, Ontario. (905) 527-1158. www.rbg.ca.

JUNE 18. **About Trees.** Guided tour. Arboretum at the University of Guelph. Guelph, Ontario. (519) 824-4120 ext. 52113. www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum.

JUNE 18–24. **World Rose Festival and Convention.** Vancouver Rose Society. Vancouver, British Columbia. (778) 338-4142. www.worldrose-vancouver2009.com.



Legacies *assume many forms*



*W*hether making estate plans, considering year-end giving, honoring a loved one or planting a tree, the legacies of tomorrow are created today.

Please remember the American Horticultural Society when making your estate and charitable giving plans. Together we can leave a legacy of a greener, healthier, more beautiful America.



For more information on including the AHS in your estate planning and charitable giving, or to make a gift to honor or remember a loved one, please contact Stephanie Perez at (703) 768-5700 ext. 127.

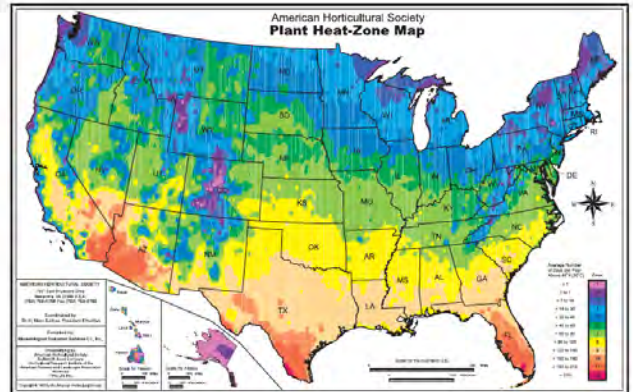
Making America a Nation of Gardeners, a Land of Gardens

PRONUNCIATIONS AND PLANTING ZONES

Most of the cultivated plants described in this issue are listed here with their pronunciations, USDA Plant Hardiness Zones, and AHS Plant Heat Zones. These zones suggest a range of locations where temperatures are appropriate—both in winter and summer—for growing each plant.

While the zones are a good place to start in determining plant adaptability in your region, factors such as exposure, moisture, snow cover, and humidity also play an important role in plant survival. The codes tend to be conservative; plants may grow outside the ranges indicated. A USDA zone rating of 0–0 means that the plant is a true annual and completes its life cycle in a year or less.

To purchase a two-by-three-foot glossy AHS Plant Heat Zone Map for \$9.95, call (800) 777-7931 or visit www.ahs.org.



Carex appalachica KAIR-eks ah-puh-LACH-ih-kuh
(USDA Zones 4–7, AHS Zones 7–1)

C. buchananii C. byoo-kuh-NAN-ee-eye (7–9, 9–6)

C. cherokeensis C. chair-o-KEE-en-sis (6–9, 9–6)

C. ciliatmarginata C. sil-ee-ah-toh-mar-jih-NAY-tuh (5–9, 9–5)

C. comans C. KO-manz (7–9, 9–7)

C. dipsacea C. dip-SAY-see-uh (7–10, 10–7)

C. divulsa C. dih-VUL-suh (4–9, 9–4)

C. dolichostachya* var. *glaberrima C. dol-ih-ko-STAH-kee-uh var.
glah-BAIR-ih-muh (5–9, 9–5)

C. elata C. eh-LAY-tuh (5–9, 9–3)

C. flacca C. FLAK-uh (5–9, 9–5)

C. grayi C. GRAY-eye (3–8, 8–1)

C. laxiculmis C. lax-ih-KULL-miss (4–9, 9–5)

C. morrowii C. mor-ROW-ee-eye (5–9, 12–1)

C. morrowii* var. *temnolepis C. mor-ROW-ee-eye var. tem-no-LEP-is
(5–9, 12–1)

C. muskingumensis C. mus-king-yew-MEN-sis (4–8, 8–1)

C. nudata C. new-DAY-tuh (7–9, 9–7)

C. oshimensis C. o-she-MEN-sis (6–9, 12–1)

C. pansa C. PAN-suh (6–9, 9–5)

C. pendula C. PEN-dyew-luh (5–9, 9–5)

C. pennsylvanica C. pen-sil-VAN-ih-kuh (4–8, 8–1)

C. phyllocephala C. fil-o-SEF-uh-luh (8–10, 10–7)

C. plantaginea C. plan-tuh-jih-NEE-uh (5–7, 7–5)

C. siderosticha C. sih-deh-ROS-tih-kuh (6–9, 9–6)

C. testacea C. tes-TAY-see-uh (6–9, 9–6)

C. texensis C. teks-SEN-sis (5–10, 10–5)

Cistus* × *aguiarii SIS-tus ah-gwi-LAIR-ee-eye (8–10, 11–7)

C. albidus C. AL-bih-dus (8–10, 10–7)

C. ×argenteus C. ar-JEN-tee-us (7–10, 10–7)

C. creticus C. KREE-tih-kus (8–10, 10–7)

C. crispus C. KRIS-pus (8–10, 10–7)

C. ×florentinus C. flor-en-TEEN-us (8–10, 10–7)

C. heterophyllus C. het-ur-ah-FIL-lus (8–10, 10–7)

C. ×hybridus C. HY-brih-dus (7–10, 10–7)

C. incanus C. in-KAN-us (8–10, 10–7)

C. inflatus C. in-FLAY-tus (8–10, 10–7)

C. ladanifer C. luh-DAN-ih-fur (8–10, 10–7)

C. ladanifer* var. *sulcatus C. luh-DAN-ih-fur var. sul-KAY-tus
(7–10, 10–7)

C. laurifolius C. law-rih-FO-lee-us (7–10, 10–7)

C. ×laxus C. LAK-sus (8–9, 9–7)

C. monspeliensis C. mon-spel-ee-EN-sis (8–10, 10–7)

C. obtusifolius C. ahb-TOO-sih-fol-ee-us (8–9, 9–7)

C. populifolius C. pop-yew-lih-FO-lee-us (7–10, 10–7)

C. ×pulverulentus C. pul-vur-yew-LEN-tuss (8–10, 10–7)

C. ×purpureus C. pur-PUR-ee-us (7–10, 10–7)

C. ×rodiaei C. ro-DY-ee-eye (8–10, 10–7)

C. salviifolius C. sal-vee-eye-FO-lee-us (8–10, 10–7)

Clethra alnifolia KLETH-ruh al-nih-FO-lee-uh (3–9, 9–1)

×*Halimocistus sahuicii* huh-lim-ee-O-sis-tus suh-HYEW-see-eye
(8–9, 9–7)

×*H. wintonensis* H. win-toh-NEN-sis (8–9, 9–7)

Halimium atriplicifolium hah-LIM-ee-um at-rih-plih-sih-FO-lee-um
(8–10, 10–7)

H. calycinum H. kal-ih-SY-num (8–10, 10–8)

H. halimifolium H. hah-lim-ih-FO-lee-um (8–10, 10–8)

H. lasianthum H. lah-see-AN-thum (8–10, 10–8)

H. ocymoides H. ah-see-MOY-deez (8–10, 10–8)

H. ×pauanum H. paw-AN-um (8–10, 10–7)

H. ×santae H. SAN-tee (8–9, 9–7)

H. umbellatum H. um-bel-LAY-tum (9–10, 10–8)

Salvia clevelandii SAL-vee-uh cleev-LAND-ee-eye (8–10, 10–1)

S. columbariae S. kol-um-BAR-ee-ee (9–11, 11–9)

S. dolomitica S. dol-o-MIT-ih-kuh (8–11, 11–8)

S. leucophylla S. loo-ko-FIL-uh (10–11, 12–1)

S. officinalis S. o-fiss-ih-NAL-iss (5–8, 8–5)

S. sclarea S. SKLAH-ree-uh (4–9, 9–1)

S. sonomensis S. so-no-MEN-sis (10–11, 12–10)

S. spathacea S. spath-uh-SEE-uh (7–11, 12–7)

S. tingitana S. tin-jih-TAN-uh (9–11, 11–8)

Viburnum carlesii vy-BER-num kar-LEEZ-ee-eye (5–8, 8–5)

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Alabama Croton: A Collector's Treasure

by Bob Hill

IF YOU LIVE to collect rare native plants that come with intriguing stories, great adaptability, and funky, silver-backed, semi-evergreen foliage, then the Alabama croton (*Croton alabamensis*, USDA Hardiness Zones 6–8, AHS Heat Zones 8–5) belongs on your horticultural map.

The open habit of this six-to-eight foot shrub allows for easy appreciation of its interesting leaves in any season. Bright green on top with dense silvery scales underneath, the foliage smells of apples when rubbed and turns deep orange in the fall. It's also hardier than its name implies. Mine survived our recent, ice-coated southern Indiana (USDA Zone 6) winter, where the temperature dipped below zero.

All in all, it's the perfect choice to stump your friends when they visit—especially if their previous experience with “croton” was limited to the gaudy tropical varieties of the genus *Codiaeum*.

NARROW NATIVE RANGE

A member of the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae), the Alabama croton is an Ice Age survivor first identified by Alabama biologist Eugene Smith in the 1870s when he was exploring the limestone bluffs above the Cahaba River in Bibb County. It became better known when Charles Mohr wrote of it in his landmark 1901 book, *Plant Life of Alabama*. According to Mohr, the plant was confined to rocky woods in the valley of the Little Cahaba, a tributary of the Cahaba River. It has also been found along the Warrior River valley in Alabama and in Coffee County, Tennessee, where it is listed as endan-



Though native to the American South, Alabama croton is hardy enough to grow in the Midwest.

gered, possibly extinct. A botanical variety, *C. alabamensis* var. *texensis*, is limited to three counties near Austin, Texas.

PASSALONG PLANT


Mine made its way to southern Indiana by way of mutual friends and long-time Alabama gardeners D.D. Martin of Cortland and Louise “Weesie” Smith of Birmingham. When Martin offered up some suckering shrubs from her garden, Louisville plant expert Mike Hayman and I were soon off on a 300-mile road trip to Alabama.

Smith had plenty of experience growing the plant. She got her first specimen about 30 years ago from plants rescued in an area of Bibb County that was being flooded in a dam project.

Most literature says it does best in moist, part shade. Other experts say it does

well in dry, well-drained soil. Smith told us it's a tighter, more attractive plant given more sunlight—talk about adaptability!

My 10-year-old plant grows in organic-rich soil in a site that gets morning sun and afternoon shade. It's about six feet tall, bears tiny cream-yellow flowers in April, followed by ornamental seed pods. Smith warned me that, if I wanted to collect the seeds, I should store them in a covered container, else she said, “when they burst open, you'll find them all over the floor.”

Alabama croton is available from a few nurseries, but it's always more fun to seek out such treasures from friends. 

A columnist for the Louisville Courier-Journal, Bob Hill operates Hidden Hill Nursery & Sculpture Garden in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

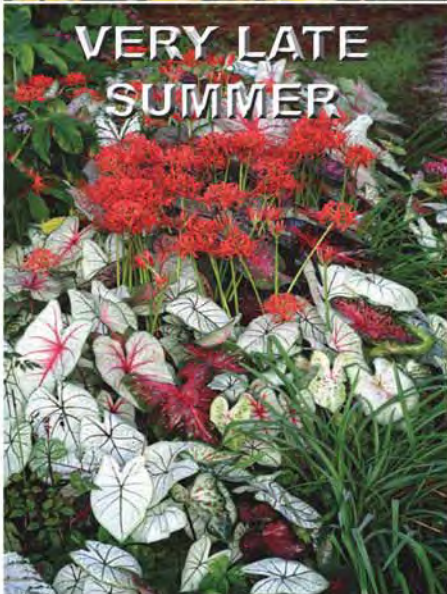
Sources

Asiatica Nursery, Lewisberry, PA.
(717) 938-8677.
www.asiaticanursery.com.

Nearly Native Nursery, Fayetteville, GA.
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