

## Perennial Notes

November 28, 1994

I should have known it was going to be an extraordinary fall with that remarkable flush of Celadine poppy blooms in late August. My mother was truly amazed, as this plant is invariably dormant in South Carolina by mid July. The abundant rainfall in September was perhaps a second harbinger. At the end of the month the UPS driver groaned and moaned when he delivered box upon box of bulbs as well as 200 lbs of bulb booster. I groaned, too, as I had not realized how carried away I had been a few months earlier when those pages of the Daffodil Mart catalogue had just kept beckoning me to circle more items. My wife, convinced that it was physically impossible to get all those bulbs planted before winter set in, panicked as she reminded me that we were leaving for two weeks in Europe in a few days. In addition, she was upset that the odor of the bulb booster had made the garage off limits to all but the most fool hardy individuals. She took little solace from the notion that it might be more effective than any electronic burglar alarm system and was energy saving besides. Now for those of you who believe that good bulb booster must reek to be effective, I can highly recommend the Daffodil Mart's product which is 65 % cricket crap. My next door neighbors still claim (at the end of November) that they get a good whiff of it from their deck, but then after all they are the same ones who complain that the garden now looks like Three Mile Island with the rings of burlap around selected dwarf conifers.

Returning from Europe in mid October, we were amazed that the hanging baskets ofimpatiens looked as if it were mid-July and that the autumn crocus (*Crocus speciosus*) was just beginning to flower. However, the smell of cricket crap reminded me of all those bulbs to plant. *Aconitum carmichaelii* (fischeri) was just coming into full bloom. This deep blue/purple flowered Aconitum was spectacular this year, and for the first time in its five year history in my garden, it bloomed to completion during the first week of November. And still there was no significant frost, just more bulbs to plant. On the ninth of November, *Hosta tardiflora* was blooming as well as *Tricyrtis formosana*. There were even blooms of *Corydalis lutea*, and more bulbs to plant. I was particularly wowed by a native woodland aster purchased from We Du Nursery last spring--*Aster cordifolius*. It was also in full bloom with dense sprays of delicate, small, blue-rayed flowers. Another surprise was *Tiarella cordifolia* 'Montrose Selection' purchased with my last order from Montrose Nursery prior to its closing in the fall of 1993 (a horticultural event of cataclysmic significance). Though I have perhaps ten cultivars of Tiarella, this one wins a Waban Hill Gold Medal Award. A spontaneous seedling found in the rock garden at Montrose, it blooms later than all other tiarellas and has the shiniest green foliage. I suspect it has some Heuchera in its genetic line? If this isn't enough, it has spectacular rosey red late autumn color which rivals that of burning bush. "Just a few plants" of this gem were offered for the first time in the final catalogue. I can already envision a stunning late autumn border of it in a dream garden of the future. And of course, there were more bulb to plants. The hard freeze on the 10th of November finally finished off the tricyrtis and corydalis, but bulb planting continued incessantly. Thanksgiving Day dawned and what a gorgeous day it was. *Hosta tardiflora* continued to bloom and there were still a few open flowers on the *Aster cordifolius*. And, at a few minutes before 2 pm, there were no more bulbs to plant, an event celebrated by a bulb dance. (What? You've never seen one of these? You just haven't planted enough bulbs!) Thanks to Mother Nature, the impossible had been accomplished. However, the big surprise of the day was yet to come. Many years ago, while living in Berlin, Germany, during a particularly mild winter in Northern Europe, we found a red rose in bloom in our garden on Christmas Day. I'll never forget

how special that was. And on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1994, in Madison, Wisconsin, while tidying up the leaves in the lower terrace, I came upon a white Primula x polyantha in full bloom. I looked in vain for any other primroses in flower and lifted the leaves of the hellebores, hoping upon hope, as these also bloomed in December in mild winters in the Berlin garden. As I went in to clean up for the T-Day feast, I snipped a stalk of primroses for a bud vase in the kitchen window. Later that evening, when all the guests had departed, and I was supposed to be loading the dishwasher for the third time, my eyes and thoughts turned to the small vase of white primroses in the window. I thought of the promises that 2000 new bulbs would soon bring, and of all my hopes, dreams and expectations for the coming growing season. Though to me the primrose symbolized promise, I recalled that in Medieval art the primrose was a symbol of imagination. However, it was my wife, working at my side, who reminded me that it was William Shakespeare who said "the primrose path of dalliance treads." Yes, it had been a most remarkable and memorable fall. Forget about loading the dishwasher!

### Coming Horticultural Events of Significance

**Our next meeting will be our annual pot luck brunch at 1100 AM on Sunday, January 15, in the Commons at Olbrich Gardens. Since only a few of us made it last January due to below zero temperatures and a snow storm, we will have a repeat performance of John Cannon's and John Frisch's music video of PS society members' gardens. Additional entertainment is planned as we hope to call on a few members who visited glorious gardens in England last summer. Please come and bring a dish to pass. We are once again inviting the Hosta Society to share this event with us. Hope to see you all there.**

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Penelope Hobhouse, the well known British gardening designer and author, will be the speaker at the Milwaukee Art Museum Garden Club at 7 pm on Tuesday, January 17, 1995, at the Milwaukee Art Museum. The donation is \$25 which includes a "light buffet" dinner. For a reservation (required), please make your check payable to MAM Garden Club and mail it to MAM Garden Club, 2011 E. Cumberland Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53211. This sounds like a wonderful mid-January event and several members have told me they are planning to attend. For further information call the Milwaukee Art Museum, 414-224-3200.

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On Saturday, February 11, WHA TV will sponsor its second annual Garden Expo at the Dane County Forum from 10AM to 3 PM. As you all recall, this event was held for the first time in the Vilas Hall studios early this year, and though it was a little hokey, those of us who attended saw lots of potential for this as an annual event. Maybe even a Philadelphia type Flower Show in the very distant future??? We have been "invited" to set up a booth and are tentatively planning to do so. We will have to provide some sort of entertainment, and I will hope to enlist a number of you to help out. Please give me a call (233-4686). In addition, "we" have agreed to provide a 20 minute educational program regarding perennials. This is a great opportunity to attract new members.

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On Thursday, February 16, 1994, the Perennial Society, The Wisconsin Hosta Society, and The Daylily Society will sponsor a talk by Roy Klehm, owner of Klehm Nursery, at 7pm in the Commons at Olbrich Gardens. His talk is entitled "The Luxuriance of Peonies, Hostas, and Daylillies. Mark you calendars for this one.

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On Wednesday, March 15, at 7 pm yours truly will speak on "Mainau, The Isle of Flowers" in the upstairs meeting room at Olbrich Gardens at our monthly meeting.

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The Perennial and Hosta Societies will sponsor a joint program on Thursday, April 20, 1994 at 7 pm in the Commons at Olbrich Gardens. Our speaker will be Galen Gates, manager of the horticultural collections at the Chicago Botanical Gardens. Galen will speak on "Shrubs and Perennials in the Mixed Border".

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Sometime in April, we hope to have a Saturday morning tour of members gardens highlighting spring bulbs. This can only be planned a week or two in advance given the vagaries of Wisconsin winters. This never got off the ground last year. We'll try to do better this year

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Saturday, May 27th, will be the date of the PS second annual sale for members and their friends. Joan Severa has graciously offered her garden as the stage for this event. Please begin thinking about what you would like to contribute to the sale from your own gardens. This is a very important fund raising event, as the speakers we have on the program do not come cheap (except for one).

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Saturday, June 17th, will be the next meeting of the Wisconsin Woody Plants Society. This will include tours of the Janesville Rotary Garden and the Anderson Japanese Garden in Rockford. As many of you know, the latter is spectacular. As usual, it will include lunch. Please call Ed Hasselkus (238-1451) if you are not a WWPS member and would like to attend.

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The Olbrich Gardens annual garden tour will take place on July 14-15 from 1000 to 1600. As several of our members have wonderful gardens on this tour of Nakoma Gardens (Ed Hasselkus, Chris Byslma, and Walter & Jean Rideout), this will take the place of our July meeting.

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In August, there will likely be an evening garden tour of some gem of a garden--I have several in mind. Details to be announced. Also, August 11 is Sunday in the Park at Olbrich. Those of us who manned our booth at this even last summer had a wonderful time, signed up a number of new members, and met some very interesting plant people from some of the other societies. I even ended up getting a start of *Linnea borealis*, Carl von Linnea's favorite plant (also known as twin flower). Hopefully, a half a dozen members will volunteer to take part in this annual event.

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September 9, 1995, a Saturday--Tentatively we are planning a tour of gardens and nurseries of Door County with the Hosta Society. Included will be Emily Hickey's garden in Bailey's Harbor as well as Meisner's Nursery near Institute. Further details and plans will be forthcoming.

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Past Activities

Many thanks to Marlyn Sachtjen who opened her beautiful garden to us for our August gathering and the wonderful talk on perennials she gave this month at our November meeting. Both events were very well attended. Thanks ,too, to Tom Cottington (PS Vice President) for the October program, a slide and music show of his garden. It was an outstanding example of what one person can do not only in the garden but also with photography. The September meeting featured Mark Zillis, a northern Illinois producer of Hostas, who gave a wonderful and informative talk on the genus hosta.

Plants That Merit Attention  
The Genus *Cimicifuga*

If per chance on a day in the latter half of July you descend from the Beltline on Seminole Highway, negotiating those curves which lead to the entrance to the University Arboretum, perhaps you will be wowed by the vibrant display of daylilies on the street corner garden of Walter and Jean Rideout. If you are like me, however, you will be touched more by the majestic fairy candles of *Cimicifuga racemosa* arising in profusion from the edges of dark wooded lot behind the lilies. This is usually the time I am returning from my summer sojourn in the mountains of western North Carolina where this plant is also rising up from deep forest glades in the high mountains, only there it occurs in combination with 10 foot tall candelabras of Turks cap lilies. To the mountain folk this plant is also known as mountain bugbane, black cohosh, and rattletop. I suppose the latter refers to the strange sound the mature reproductive follicles make in the autumn mountain winds. This is the most common member of the genus under cultivation and is widely available. A number of other representatives of this genus are found in North America. Two others which also occur in the mountains of the East coast include *C. americana* and *C. rubifolia*. According to Hortus Third, the latter only occurs in the mountains of Tennessee, but the only time I have ever seen it in cultivation has been in the North American section of the Berlin Botanical Garden, where large clumps of this very larged leafed form arise like islands in what is literally a lime green sea of *Carex plantaginea*, another native of the southeast United States. A very memorable plant combination, as you can imagine! It blooms after *C. racemosa*. Pamela Wolfe in her Midwestern Gardens does report the *C. rubifolia* is growing in the Des Plaines, IL garden of Erwin Evert. Two additional species are found only in the Pacific Northwest--*C. elata* and *C. laciniata*. I have never seen these in the wild or otherwise, and know of no commercial sources.

Two species which are comparable to the North American forms, are found in Siberia and Kamchatka. *C. dahurica*, available from Shady Oaks Nursery, blooms in my garden in August and the racemes of flowers are more compact than those of *C. racemosa*. *C. simplex* (also known as *C. foetida*) is perhaps the showiest form in flower and is the latest blooming (September and October). It makes truly dramatic clumps of showy white plumes. Joan Severa brought a flowering spike of this plant to an October meeting of the Hosta Society. I must say the fragrance was on the pleasant side, not fetid as one would expect of a good bugbane.

A very striking member of this family is *C. ramosa* var. *atropurpurea*. I have no idea of the origins of this plant which is becoming more widely distributed, though still relatively expensive (also available from Shady Oaks as well as the Flower Factory). The stems are deep purple throughout the growing season. The foliage is also purplish, but more so in the spring. I have also observed quite a bit of variation from source to source in the purple coloration of the leaves, though some of this maybe due to variations in light exposure. The largest clump in my garden rises to 7 feet when in bloom in August and September and the many spires of flowers are slightly pinkish. However, it has the most fragrance of any *Cimicifuga* I have grown, and when the breeze is right it will perfume the garden 50 feet away.

I have saved the best for last as my favorite member of this genus at the present time is *C. japonica*. This and the closely related plant *C. japonica* var. *acerina*, originate, of course, from Japan. What distinguishes them from the other species is the shiny foliage which remains basilar throughout the growing season. I purchased *C. japonica* at We Du

Nurseries in North Carolina in the summer of 1992. This nursery specializes in native plants in the Far East which have counterparts in North America. For the first year it didn't look like much, but this summer it was moved to a place of prominence in the garden. Sometime in August it began to send up a dozen three foot , purplish stalks from the basal leaves, topped with very long slightly branched racemes of white flowers. It took weeks to come into full bloom and was a very remarkable plant according to all who saw it. This is a must have plant for the woodland garden. I added *C. japonica* var. *acerina* , also from We Du Nurseries, this year. Again, it didn't look like much this summer. Richard Weaver (the We of "We Du") collected his original stock from seedlings near Nikko, Japan, and he assures me that if I am patient, as a mature plant it is truly spectacular with maple shaped leaves whose individual leaflets are a foot long. Oh, if anticipation would only make plants grow faster!

The cultivation for all members of this genus are pretty much the same. They require moist , woody soil at all times and tolerate drought poorly. In Madison they will tolerate quite a bit of sun if kept moist, but dappled shade is preferable. They do not bloom well in deep shade, if at all. I have staked *C. racemosa* and *C. atropurpurea* on occasions, but this does not seem to be generally necessary. They haven't been bothered by mold or slugs in my garden.

## MEMBERSHIP

The following is a listing of current members. I am sorry that the telephone numbers are very incomplete:

Keith L.	Anderson	4509 Woods End	Madison	WI	53711	
Eloise	Asbjornson	606 Merryturn Rd	Madison	WI	53714	
Mary	Benes	1101 Oak Way	Madison	WI	53705	
Ron & Stephanie	Bloomquist	5743 Wilshire Dr	Madison	WI	53711	
Raelynn	Bodell	1429 Lucy Lane	Madison	WI	52711	
Barbara	Borman	531 Farwell Dr	Madison	WI	53704	
Jean	Bowden	2806 Warner St	Madison	WI	53713	
Cathie	Burner	216 N. Dickman	Madison	WI	53703	
Chris	Bylsma	734 Miami Pass	Madison	WI	53711	
Ruth	Cadoret	4308 Hillcrest Cir	Madison	WI	53705	
John	Cannon	232 Kensington Dr	Madison	WI	53704	
Tom	Cottington	7421 North Ave	Middleton	WI	53562	608-836-7033
Martha	Coughlin	521 S. Dickinson	Madison	WI	53703	
Teresa	Countryman	1125 Winston Dr	Madison	WI	53711	
Mary & Paul	Czynak-Lyne	2532 Van Hise	Madison	WI	53711	
Ruth Ann	Dahl	5714 Dogwood Pl	Madison	WI	53705	
Bob & Jean	Dent	1104 Birch Haven Cir	Monona	WI	53716	
Cheryl	Eberle	123 Union Rd	Brooklyn	WI	53521	
Helen & John	Emley	2674 Norwich St	Madison	WI	53711	
Jack & Judy	Ferreri	3108 Timber Lane	Verona	WI	53593	
John	Fritsch	232 Kensington Dr	Madison	WI	53704	
Janet	George	15 Westwyn Cr	Madison	WI	53704	
Scott	Gordon	2210 Calypso Rd	Madison	WI	53704	608-246-0281
Frank	Greer	925 Waban Hill	Madison	WI	53711	608-233-4686
Steve	Harsy	4600 Edgewood Ct	Madison	WI	53765	
Edward	Hasselkus	746 Miami Pass	Madison	WI	53711	608-238-1451
Judith	Hoenisch	221 N. Park St	Belleville	WI	53508	
Jeanine	Johnson	1106 Saybrook Rd	Madison	WI	53711	

Lisa Ann	Johnson	2274 Highridge Trail	Madison	WI	
Mark	Johnson	3701 Dennett Dr	Madison	WI	53714
Lois E.	Kinlen	26 Merlham Dr	Madison	WI	53705
Doris	Kistler	8727 Airport Rd	Middleton	WI	53562
Bob & Lucy	Lasseter	2913 Walnut Wood Ct	Madison	WI	53705
Steve	Lesch	PO Box 55056	Madison	WI	53705
Mora	Lincoln	6015 Winnequah RD	Madison	WI	53716
Peggy	Lubby	4506 Woods End	Madison	WI	53711
Pamela	Mather	4337 Mineral Pt Rd	Madison	WI	53705
Ann	McCormick	4870 Canter Cr	Madison	WI	53704
Wendy & Todd	Meicher	5510 Glenway	McFarland	WI	
Mary	Melahh	6402 Alison Ln	Madison	WI	53711
Cheri & Bill	Mohoney	6988 W. Old Sauk Rd.	Middleton	WI	53562
Ann	Munson	5304 Midmoor Rd	Monona	WI	53716
Pat	Newell	2211 Keyes Ave	Madison	WI	53711
Richard	Olsen	Box 258	Deerfield	WI	53531
Marcia A.	Pekul	2895 Oaklawn Rd	Stoughton	WI	53589
Reynold	Peterson	3120 Gregory St	Madison	WI	53711
Trudy	Pieterick	5309 Barton Rd	Madison	WI	53711
Dan	Pinkston	4517 Mallory Cir	Madison	WI	52704
Dave	Reese	2210 Calypso Rd	Madison	WI	53704
Jean & Walter	Rideout	1306 Seminole Hwy	Madison	WI	53711
Sarah	Rose	4110 Manitou Way	Madison	WI	53711
Phyllis	Sanner	764 Brooklyn-Evansville Rd	Evansville	WI	53536
Mary	Selle	N3003 Co M	Watertown	WI	53094
Joan	Severa	5806 Pembroke Dr	Madison	WI	53711
Tracy	Shampo	1025 Emerald St	Madison	WI	53715
Charlotte	Sutter	2039 Sutter Dr	Mt. Horeb	WI	53572
John	Tallman	1815 Summit Ave	Madison	WI	53705
Gary	Tipler	511 E. Main St.	Madison	WI	53703
Mary Lou	Tyne	1602 Wendy Lane	Madison	WI	53716
James	Weber	135 S Hancock	Monroe	WI	53703
Anne	Wilson	1802 Prairie Rd	Madison	WI	53711
Bonnie	Wilson	7174 Mineral Pt Rd	Verona	WI	53593

608-246-0281  
608-274-3434

### DUES, DUES, DUES

Speaking of membership, it is time to renew for 1995. Some of you have asked me when your membership starts and ends. Traditionally, this is simply done per calendar year which makes it easy for such a small organization. In other words, even if you became a member in August of 1994, your dues for 1995 would still be due in January. It is only \$5.00 folks, and to be honest we desperately need the cash flow.

The costs for our speakers, mailings, and newsletter all add up. So please use the next page to send in your annual contribution. If we can increase the profits of our annual plant sale in May, we won't have to think about raising these dues either.

**THE PERENNIAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP 1995**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS

 change in address

STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

 INDIVIDUAL.....\$5.00 FAMILY.....\$7.50

Please mail completed form and checks made out to The Perennial Society to:

Scott L. Gordon  
 2210 Calypso Rd  
 Madison, WI 53704 (246-0281)

I am interested in helping out with the following activities:

 Programs    Plant Sale    Mailings    Community projects WHA 1995 Gardening Expo