

## Perennial Notes

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society  
August 10, 1997

*It would never occur to most gardeners to write a poem or paint a picture. Most gardens are the only artistic effort their owners ever make. Yet the one art that everyone chooses, or feels in some degree qualified to practice, is paradoxically the most complex of all.....Gardening is complex because it combines aesthetic judgements and practical decisions with the science and craftsmanship in a kaleidoscope of variables. A poet is limited to the dictionary, a sculptor starts with a block of stone, but a gardener starts with a plot that is frozen one day and flooded the next, here in sun and there in shadow, teased by the wind and tantalized by drought, plagued by insects, toyed with by birds, mined by moles.*

Principles of Gardening--The Practice of the Gardener's Art. Hugh Johnson, Simon & Schuster, 1996 edition.

### Coming Events

August 16, 1997 Saturday. Members and friends tour to Mileager's Gardens (Racine) and Craig Bergman's Gardens (Winthrop Harbor, Illinois). Between the two nurseries, we will visit one of the Nature Conservancies "Last Great Places", the Chiwaukee Prairie (on the Lake Michigan shoreline near Kenosha) to see the spectacular display of prairie flowers. Optional side trip to the Hebron Antique Gallery, Hebron, Illinois, specializing in antiques for the garden not out of the question. See details on frontspiece of this newsletter.

August 17, 1997 Sunday. We will be participating in Sundae in the Gardens at Olbrich Botanical Gardens from 12 noon to 4 pm. Hopefully, we will advertise ourselves and pick up a few new members with an "Ask the Experts" booth. If you want to participate, give Stephanie Bloomquist a call at 274-8326.

August 30, 1997 9 AM For those of you who have to be around the holiday weekend, we will hold our first annual members Labor Day weekend plant and seed exchange. Joan Sevrera has volunteered to host this in her driveway. Bring clumps of daylilies, hostas, irises, peonies, and whatever else that can be divided. Seeds will also be exchanged at this time. Joan promises to divide many of the daylily clumps in her garden. There will be coffee and treats, and a plant or two, or three.....for everyone. There will be no postcard reminder for this event

September 17, 1997, 7PM Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. Gerry Kopf, Bald Eagle Nursery, Fulton, IL, will speak on "Hardy Ornamental Grasses for Midwestern Gardens". Gerry is a regional expert on this topic and maintains trial gardens for non-native grasses at his nursery.

September 20 Joint tour with the Hosta Society to the Dubuque Arboretum. This is a wonderful nearby regional arboretum with a good collection of garden conifers and the world's largest collection of hosta species/cultivars. Side trips may include Dennis Hermsen's fabulous conifer nursery and display garden in Farley Iowa, Gene Kaufman's woody plant nursery (Ridge Road Nursery) on the bluffs of the Mississippi River, and a stop at Timber Ridge Gardens in Elizabeth, Illinois (see November speaker, below) on the way home. There will be something for everyone on this jaunt! To get everything in, we may need flashlights!

October 22, 1997, 7PM, Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. Annual business meeting and election of officers. Ed Hasselkus will present the basic details of our tour of the gardens of southern England in preparation for our September, 1998 tour. We'll also have a slide show on highlights of the gardener's year.

November 19, 1997, Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. Mary Ann Leigh of Timber Ridge Gardens, Elizabeth, IL, (South of Shullsburg in SW Wisconsin) will speak on "New, Underused, and Unusual Perennials for the Garden in 1998". Some of you may have heard her wonderfully, exuberant talk at the Garden Expo this year.

February 1, 1998 11 AM, Atrium, Olbrich Gardens. Annual brunch with the hosta society. Our featured speaker will be Professor James Steakley, UW Professor of German. His topic will be "German Gardens--Their Reflection of German Culture".

February 21,22 1998 WHA TV Garden Expo, Dane Country Forum.

June 24-July 2, 1998. Tour of the gardens of England. (See information below)

October 10, 1998, Saturday, Olbrich Gardens. "Gardening with Bulbs". A one day symposium co-sponsored with Olbrich Gardens. Speakers will be Brent Heath of the Daffodil Mart ,Gloucester, Virginia , Mike Heger, Ambergate Gardens, Chaska Minnesota, Scott Kuntz, Old House Gardens (specializes in heirloom bulbs), Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Galen Gates, Director of Plant Collections, Chicago Botanical Garden.

*No two gardens are the same. No two days are the same in one garden. And yet on this flapping canvas an amateur, often without previous experience, and holding the instruction book in one hand, tries to daub a vision of a better world--or if that is a bit high, at least to grow vegetables and feed the family.*

Principles of Gardening--The Practice of the Gardener's Art. Hugh Johnson, Simon & Schuster, 1996 edition.

### Other Coming Events

August 23 Hosta Society's tour of the Janesville Rotary Garden and the fabulous Anderson Garden (Japanese) in Rockford. WHPS members welcome. Contact Jean Rideout for details (274-3434).

September 6 10 AM Wisconsin Woody Plants Society semi annual meeting, Norskadelen (Norwegian heritage museum) in Coon Valley off of Highway 14 near La Crosse. There is an \$8.00 fee for lunch. If you would like to attend, contact Ed Hasselkus (238-1451) for more details.

September 20 Annual members sale of the Wisconsin-Illinois Chapter of the NA Rock Garden Society, in a great garden in Richmond, Illinois. This is also a wonderful regional antique center. Call Jack Ferreri for details (845-8674).

### News You Can Use from the Good Garden Fairies

The WHPS annual plant sale was a great success. It cleared over \$2300. Given that only a handful of plants sold for more than \$3, we sold one heck of a lot of plants!! Thanks to everyone for their donations and there were a lot of you. Some we can always count on, and there were some great new contributors. We can't begin to thank all the volunteers, but you will be rewarded by the good garden fairies in your next garden life. All hats are off to Heidi Carvin for hosta-ing (did you know she was president elect of the Hosta Society?) the sale and opening up her lovely garden. The fairies hope many of you were able to see this garden again on the July Olbrich Gardens Tour--it had been transformed!! (and not by the fairies)

The good garden fairies report that another transformation has occurred in a certain Nakoma garden. A die hard has been reformed! WHPS member Ed Hasselkus, Professor Emeritus of Horticulture, Curator of the University Arboretum's Longnecker Gardens, and winner of the Arthur B. Scott Medal (the Olympic gold medal of American Horticulture), has actually taken to using mulch in his perennial borders. And you know, he says it works!!

Everyone enjoyed our delightful summer evening tour of WHPS member Marlyn Sachtjen's wonderful garden. Did you know that it is soon to be given national exposure? Rumor has it that a television crew from The Garden Channel was on the premises the last week in July, despite the tornadoes which took down a few trees during the filming. The garden will be the feature of an episode of the "The Gardener's Diary" (spring, 1998). Too bad Verona-Fitchburg is the only area community that receives this cable television station. The good garden fairies plan to circulate a petition amongst Madison gardeners to try to get TCI to add something besides sports and movie channels! Can you believe they just added another sports channel??? (TCI executives will be plagued by slugs and deer in their next garden life.)

The WHPS has received a mailing from the Mid-Atlantic Hardy Plant Society with the listing of all of the other US groups--these include two in Oregon, one in Michigan and one in Connecticut. Immediate plans are to exchange newsletters between groups and to come up with a few ideas to promote cooperation--perhaps sponsoring

speakers on a “national tour” as is a common practice among the US chapters of the North American Rock Garden Society. They are also considering holding a national meeting of representatives from each of the groups (Beginnings of a Board of Directors of the North American Hardy Plant Society??)

Darrell Probst's (63 Williamsville Rd., Hubbardston, MA 01452) new epimedium list is out. Darrell edits an epimedium newsletter and leads a regular plant collecting expedition to China to find new ones. About 60 varieties are listed. Approximately 40 are for sale outright (6\$ to \$35), another 10 (choice of one) for making a \$75 contribution toward this fall's expedition, and the remainder for sale by mail auction, a couple of which have minimum bids of \$500. (Well, how do you think he funds his plant collecting trips?) The descriptions are fuel for epimedium lust, but alas, there is no blue flowering one. Many of them seem to have originated from the collection of Harold Epstein (the king of epimediums) of Larchmont, NY, noted horticulturist and a founding member of the American Conifer Society. Harold has been gardening in the same spot since 1937, and epimediums are his hallmark. He introduced *Epimedium x youngianum* 'niveum' to the gardening world, and has a clump which is 50 years old. For a discussion of his garden see The Collector's Garden by Ken Druse (pp29-31, Clarkson Potter, 1996) Anyone heading up that way soon? Addendum--Sorry to report that Harold Epstein, plantsman extraordinaire, passed away a few weeks ago at the age of 94, but not before a new epimedium was named after him--*Epimedium epsteini*. See Darrell Probst's short article on epimediums in the most recent issue of the North American Rock Garden Society Quarterly.

Out, Out Damn Spots!! Every year at this time area gardens are hit by an affliction of Solomon seals, both true and false varieties. Both *Polygonatum* and *Smilacina* develop pea size, pale yellow spots on the leaves which eventually develop into a generalized rusty-yellow discoloration. Jeff Epping (Director of Horticulture at Olbrich) believes it is a rust--a fungal disease. Does anyone have any additional information? The Good Garden Fairies have no ideas on how to control it, but believe it must be similar to the rust which seems to afflict select plants of Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) in most of the same gardens.

Speaking of Jeff Epping, the GGF recently paid him a visit to see the results of all his efforts in restoring the Sunken Garden at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. (Remember what it looked like last August at our pot luck dinner?) Needless to say, the results are spectacular and are reminiscent of a similar garden at Longwood Gardens near Philadelphia...The GGF were particularly intrigued with the use of flowering annuals, as well as the collection of *Scabiosa*. The water lilies in the reflecting pool have yet to take off, but they are coming along. The Good Garden Fairies promised to use their magic to revive an anemic row of coleus and restore the tattered edges of the Eunice Fisher Hosta Garden. As you recall, the hosta garden lost the blue spruce trees which provided the majority of the shade, in the past year, and the replacement hornbeams have fared rather poorly!

*What, if anything, do the infinity of different ideas of a garden, traditional and individual, have in common? They vary so much--in purpose, in size, in style and content--that not even flowers, or indeed plants at all, can be said to be essential. In the last analysis there is only one common factor between all gardens, and that is control of nature, to a great or lesser extent, by humans. Control, that is, for aesthetic reasons. A garden is not a farm.*

Principles of Gardening--The Practice of the Gardener's Art. Hugh Johnson, Simon & Schuster, 1996 edition.

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WHPS member Joan Severa is writing another book, only this time rather than period clothing, it is going to be a book for gardeners in the upper midwest. Joan has kindly let us serialize it for Perennial Notes. The first installment appears below. Please contact Joan if you have any comments (271-5778). She is looking for a potential publisher and would appreciate any suggestions.

### Temperate Pleasures

#### Growing Perennials in the North Temperate Zone

##### Introduction

This book is for gardeners, whether experienced or aspiring, who find themselves in need of information about the care and feeding of perennials in the northern midwest of the United States. As these hardy gardeners know well, this is an area seldom covered in the garden literature. As I write this, there are literally no books and few articles dealing with creative perennial gardening in zone 4. Only with experience does one discover just how hazardous it is to trust the data in most nursery catalogs. Discovering what grows well in conditions provided by the garden's nooks and crannies can take a lifetime.

About 25 years ago I came to my current home on a scalped, sloping, one quarter acre lot of subsoil and builder's fill. It was edged with huge, half-dead honeysuckle bushes and native grape vines, and overshadowed by enormous trees. For three years the previous owners had been trying desperately (and unsuccessfully) to make it into a typical suburban turf lawn. I realized early on that these conditions provided me with a real advantage--a clean slate! I began immediately to make it into gardens. I wanted gardens. I needed gardens. I had dreams of gardens. I knew a little about shade plants and ground covers and had a legacy of hand-me-down daylilies and hostas. I dreamed of drifts of textured green in the shady back yard and billows of color in the somewhat sunnier front.

I did some good basic things, like correcting drainage in the worst areas, but I also made every error possible in some others. I did almost no soil amendment (I called it "dirt" then). I underestimated the impermeable nature of the basic clay subsoil, and planted things in inadequate holes which then promptly filled up with water. I made gardens that were so small that I couldn't keep the grass out of them. I made others

that were too big and without paths. I planted everything I was given, including invasive beauties such as *Lysimachia clethroides* (gooseneck loosestrife), which I am still attempting to "isolate", but which is too beautiful to eradicate completely. I didn't mulch except for heavy gravel over plastic which became a weedy disaster in six months. I tossed enormous quantities of leaves and branches into the back corners of the lot (and on neighboring empty lots), leaving them to rot and never thinking of reusing them. I lost many plants I could have saved, either through carelessness or ignorance of their requirements.

I had successes too, mostly accidental, as there are some plants that thrive in almost any given situation. Moving native plants from nearby woodlots (just ahead of the bull dozers) was one of my more successful "experiments". Where the soil had been left in its original state, near the sides and back of the lot, these native plants loved the dryness and shade under the tall trees--it was home turf.

Again by accident, I learned what rotting bark and wood chips can do for poor soil. There were several areas of young oak trees which were getting scraped and wounded by the lawnmower. I had rough bark hauled in from a local railroad tie yard (and I do mean rough--there were three-foot long strips of bark and big chips and splinters of wood), and laid it down about a foot thick in broad beds over layers of soaked newspapers, around the young trees. Then, because I was so busy in other areas, I left those patches alone. They looked serene and quiet with their bark covering and I didn't mind the absence of green. In two years, however, those bark beds were like a native wood lot, standing thick with volunteer plants and even shrubs. Birds and squirrels had planted elderberry and native red-osier dogwood bushes and voles had brought in Solomon's seal, *Uvularia* (merry bells), columbines, celandine poppies, violets, and jack-in-the-pulpit. I soon found I could incorporate other native and non-native plants into this mix, simply by digging out something I didn't want (nettles had volunteered too) and putting in something else more appealing. And the soil was so much improved I could hardly believe it. Subsequently, I have done nothing further to improve this soil, above amendments in planting holes of some choice specimens, but these are now among the loveliest spots in the garden. I need to insert a little tidbit right here. I also learned to leave some nettles growing in out-of-the-way places for a certain kind of tortoise shell butterfly larvae, which will apparently not eat anything else. As a result, torties are my first garden visitors in spring!

Gardening magazines began to fill my book shelves the way the leaves did the back corners of the lot. I read them from cover to cover. Gradually I learned things, usually at least one salient fact per issue that stayed with me, plus thousands of little scraps of information: lavender needs sharp drainage, so set it in sand; aquilegia cultivars will die without very good drainage; delphiniums like a dusting of wood ashes; don't touch gasplants leaves, they contain a photosensitive irritant; hellebores will bloom if given a yearly dose of Epsom salts. I learned to plant bulbs much more deeply and further apart than recommended, if I wanted long-lived clumps---and on and on! Gradually these facts accrued into a lump of knowledge. This was just enough to realize how little I actually knew, and how little was written about gardening vicissitudes in the north temperate zone. I began a hard search for more specific information for our area, but though I accumulated ever so many reference books, I never found one which dealt with all the issues of zone four gardening. I always chose

books about perennial gardens, especially if shade plants were covered, and books with an abundance of color photographs of various plant combinations. I am a visually oriented person, so I dislike garden charts and diagrams.

When one writes a book, it is impossible to write everything about everything. And some facts slip by the best writers, perhaps because most expect the reader to have a basic knowledge in certain areas. Many books are designed solely to locate and show off elaborate gardens. This may be irreverent, but I think there are far too many books about English and French gardens! Even when well done, such books do not provide much help for the average American gardener. Most books do not identify plants in the illustrations down to the last stem, as I so ardently wish. Then there are the botanical texts, which require a high level of expertise to follow, and are usually too in-depth in their narrow fields to be of much assistance. There are books on advanced methods of propagation, grafting, and hybridizing. I avoided them at first but now I scan them to soak up simple methods to propagate the perennials I love to grow.

Over time, I have acquired a very useful and varied garden library as the reader has no doubt surmised, which will be reflected in the bibliography. These are great books! They include books on starting plants from seeds, treatises on composting and soil building, woody shrubs, pruning, bulbs, vines, wildflowers, and on separate plant families. You should begin to collect all the books you can and continue to add to your collections. They will all be helpful in some way.

Having said all this, I would like to add that there are many wonderful books not helpful for gardening in the northern, temperate climate which nonetheless should be kept at one's elbow (along with a "few" tantalizing catalogs from specialty mail order nurseries) all winter long to survive the winter doldrums and to inspire thoughts for yet another glorious spring to come. A few of these books are even from England! They may inspire you to stretch the mind to make plans to accommodate a few "borderline hardies" in micro-environmental situations in the garden, without getting too carried away. Beth Chatto's "The Green Tapestry" is just one such book. In it I have discovered some new (to me) plants which I have been able to grow successfully thanks to her insights. Her information is founded on the understanding of the provenance of the plants she grows, and their special requirements and the photographs of plant combinations are without parallel.

I do have to make one statement which qualifies all that I will be telling you. I am an opinionated gardener, though I am not apologizing for this. Every time I hear one of the of the world's famous gardeners speak, or read any of their books, I come across highly opinionated statements. Gardeners, I have found, are always opinionated! I don't agree with a lot of their opinions, but I am glad they express them. You may ignore those of mine which don't appeal to you and please feel perfectly free to go ahead and develop some of your own. I here offer to you some of the hard earned results of my experimental dance with a patch of rough, mostly shady ground in southern Wisconsin.

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...the moment always comes when the taste of every true flower-lover turns also towards something less usual and obvious. .... I mean something which deserves to be called 'a painter's flower'. That is to say, its beauty, neither garish nor effective at first sight, requires to be looked into and esteemed by a standard of values quite different from those by which we judge, say, an herbaceous border by the mass of color it presents at the height of summer..... These flowers depend on their loveliness of shape, coloring, marking, or texture....They are flowers which painters have delighted, or should delight, to paint.

Some Flowers, Vita Sackville-West, Harry N. Abrahms, Inc, 1993 (reissue)

### Grasses for the Woodland Garden

Since the grass craze began back in the 80's, I have envied my friends with sunny perennial borders for their bold use of tall ornamental grasses. In some ways, these are the ultimate foliage plant as they not only bring a dramatic sense of movement to the garden, but also persist as a dynamic structural element through much of the long winter months. How I longed to grow large clumps of the various cultivars of such ornamentals as *Miscanthis* and the Japanese blood grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), or the native grasses such as prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*, my all time favorite when used as a massed ground cover) and Indian switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*). No one was writing about grasses for the shade, other than a mere mention of "shade tolerant" grasses. However, a visit to a good friend's large garden in 1993 was the beginning of the end of my despair. In this garden during a late August visit, I took note of three large clumps of *Miscanthis sinensis* 'Gracilimus variegates' (now offered as 'Morning Light') growing in shade. Sunlight filtering through the trees highlighted the magnificent, airy, translucent long thin blades of grass dancing in the breeze. Absolutely enchanting! A short time thereafter, I had the opportunity to purchase these three clumps and they now add grace and movement to my own garden particularly in the filtered sunshine of late summer mornings! At about the same time, a trip to the Berlin Botanical Garden's North American collection revealed a magnificent ground cover in the Eastern woodland garden--*Carex plantaginea*. This plant is indeed native to North America, and when I began looking around my family's property in the mountains of North Carolina, lo and behold, here was that *Carex* as well as several others. So from these origins, I have now tried 40 or more "grasses" for the shade in the past four years. Several of my favorites were collected from the wild, and I still have no clue as to their identification. Admittedly, I have also lost quite a few. Those you won't have to read about.

Unfortunately, few of the grasses for the shade grow tall enough to provide true structure and movement in the woodland garden. The exceptions are *Miscanthis sinensis* 'Gracilimus variegates', as mentioned above, but it is a warm weather grass, which means it doesn't really get going until the first warm muggy days of June. Additionally, it never blooms in these conditions (one of its best features in the sun) and the stems/blades do not obtain enough "woodiness" during the growing season to add to the winter scene. In fact, after the first couple of snow or ice storms, it looks



pretty disheveled and you might as well cut it to the ground. However, there is one grass that I have found for the shade, that grows to a height of up to three feet, whose most notable feature is its winter presence in the garden--*Hakonechloa macra*, so called Hakone grass, from the island of Honshu, Japan. For me it forms loose, airy clumps of a rich green during the summer and produces a few not very showy inflorescences. However in the autumn, it turns a delightful pale brown color, and persists in the winter shade garden, dancing in every winter's gale. Time and time again, I have seen it completely flattened by ice and heavy wet snow storms, only to restore itself to a completely upright position when the weather improves. And every spring, I feel a little guilty when I cut back these airy fronds that have kept me company through the long Wisconsin winter. Unfortunately, it is hard to find in the trade, but worth looking for. I was delighted to learn that it is treasured by Harold Epstein. He introduced the popular *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureole' to US gardens (see below), but according to Ken Druse "Epstein also grows the rarely seen solid-green form; but it is unlikely that anyone will ever discover the beauty he sees in this species--as it is unassuming as its protector" (Ken Druse, *The Collector's Garden*, p 30) Well, I disagree with this statement. Make this grass a part of your winter shade garden, and you will too!!

There are two additional woodland grasses that attain considerable height in the shade garden--*Chasmanthium latifolium* (northern oat or spangle grass) and *Hysterix patula* (bottle brush grass), both natives. The former produces marvelous spangled inflorescences in the late summer which very much remind me of the sea oat grass of the sand dunes of the southeast coast of the United States. I have found it somewhat temperamental to grow, and have moved it around several times over the years to find "just the right spot." Bottle brush grass, produces its namesake inflorescences (which is really the only reason you want to grow it), and is the tallest grass in my shade garden. Collected from the mountains of North Carolina, it thrives in damp woodland conditions. Though clump forming, it tends to flop somewhat in cultivation, where in the wild it always comes up through underbrush which gives it considerable support. It seems to grow well anywhere in the shade garden, and two negative attributes are that the cats love to eat it in the spring, and it self sows readily. It is a cool weather grass and is usually in full bloom by mid July.

I have a number of favorites in the *Carex* (sedge) family, many of which are suitable for growing under a few inches of water. My shady pond would be incomplete without *Carex elata* 'Bowles golden'. Its golden yellow leaves have thin green margins and against the dark water of the pond they are a show stopper. It is tussock forming, and obtains a height of 18 inches. To be honest, I haven't figured out a good way to winter it over as I grow it in a pot on a submerged pond shelf, but next winter I'll try out another idea. Another favorite was purchased from three different mail order nurseries, one of whom was honest about it (Nancy Goodwin's, Montrose Nursery) and said that they had no idea what the name of it was. It forms a low fountain of slender, hair like leaves mostly white with a narrow border of green. To the best of my "knowledge" this is *Carex hachijoensis* var. *tenuilepis*. Obviously of Japanese origin, it is one I wouldn't be without as its foliage makes a stunning contrast to that of other shade loving plants. The tallest *Carex* I grow is *Carex pendula* (weeping sedge) which I am certain would grow well in standing water. It has a great form with yellow green leaves and makes a bold statement in the woodland garden,

obtaining a height of 2-3 feet. My favorite sedge for a woodland ground cover is *Carex pennsylvania* (Pennsylvania sedge) This appears to be native to my garden, and if you want to see it at its finest, pay a visit to the oak savannas in White Mound County Park in Sauk County, WI. It is light green and stoloniferous, making very nice tufts. Another sedge I wouldn't be without, is the palm sedge--*Carex muskingumensis*--native to the Western US. Its numerous leaves resemble palm trees and it will also grow in standing water. It is great for its contrasting foliage! A particularly nice form, *C. muskingumensis* 'Oehme' has a clear yellow border around the leaves. Though some have found palm sedge invasive, it has not spread to any extent in my garden, and I divide the clumps every other year. My favorite sedge for edging the shady border is *Carex siderostica* 'Variegata'. This has beautiful wide green and white leaves, tinged pink in early spring, and increase rapidly. It is only 3-4 inches high. Other *Carex* family members successfully grown ( and worthy of mention) in my zone four garden include *Carex plantaginea* (marvelous ribbed leaves, warm weather grass, somewhat temperamental with transplanting), *Carex nigra* 'Variegata', *Carex morrowi* 'Aureovariegata' (sold under several different names, warm weather grass, with striking green and yellow leaves, needs mulch in winter), *Carex ornithopoda* 'Variegata' (green leaves are narrowly striped white), and *Carex conica* 'Variegata' (another green and white leafed sedge)

Over the years, I have tried a number of members of the *Luzula* family (wood rushes) *Luzula nivea* (snowy woodrush) is definitely the favorite. Its dark green leaves are accented with a covering of white hairs and the flower heads are snowy white with bright long white hairs. It was a favorite of Gertrude Jekyll, and in one of her many books a long shady border, pictured in a black and white photograph, is lined with this wonderful short grass as far as you can see. It stands out so in the photograph, as to be instantly identifiable. I have had no luck with the gorgeous variegated forms of *L. sylvatica* in zone four, but *L. sylvatica* 'Hohe Tatra' (from the Tatra Mts.) with its bright greenish-yellow leaves has been a standout.

Finally, no dissuasion of woodland grasses is complete without the praise of *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureole' or 'Albovariegata'. With several inches of pine straw mulch, they have persisted for years and I have several large clumps of each. Don't believe the zone 6 hardiness limit. 'Aureole' is the showiest and is a wonderful plant to use in a shady border for its cascading clumps of bright yellow color and fine lines. The beautiful green and cream variegation of 'Albovariegata' is more subtle, but definitely a plant you do not want to be without. These are among the taller grasses for the shade, but neither (especially 'Aureola') compares in height to *H. macra*.

A. Hort Hound

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### 1998 WHPS Tour to England

The travel committee has proposed the following "tentative" itinerary in cooperation with the English travel agency "In Quest of the Classics":

June 24, Wednesday: London Gatwick/Sissinghurst. Upon arrival in London, Gatwick, guests are met by their tour escort and escorted to their executive coach. Depending on the time of arrival, a stop will be made for lunch on your own, as you

head south into Kent and visit your first garden, Sissinghurst Gardens. This is the masterpiece of the late Vita Sackville-West and Sir Harold Nicolson. It features axial walks with side gardens (each with a separate color scheme) culminating in arches and statues. The gardens feature herbs, rhododendrons, roses and herbaceous plants. Your final destination is nearby Battle where we suggest two nights at Powdermills, a first class hotel set in a beautiful 18th century country house, filled with antiques. This evening will include dinner at the hotel.

June 25, Thursday: Wakehurst/Great Dixter. This morning we visit Wakehurst Place Garden. It dates from Norman times and has been managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew since 1965. It features a unique glade planted with species normally growing at 10,000 feet in the Himalayas. This afternoon, visit Great Dixter, a 15th century half-timbered manor house in a truly "English" garden setting. Yew hedges, topiary, and garden buildings create a delightful setting for flower borders which contain a rich diversity of plants. Return to Battle for overnight at Powdermills.

June 26, Friday: Beth Chatto Gardens/Bressingham Gardens. Today drive north to Colchester for a visit to The Beth Chatto Gardens..Mrs. Chatto designed this garden in 1960, and she has inspired many gardeners by using plants for all sorts of conditions (wet, dry, shade, etc.). Her garden is now managed by the Royal Horticulture Society. This afternoon includes a visit of Bressingham Gardens near Thetford, which mainly consists of 5 acres of island beds set in an undulating meadow with mature trees, along with a smaller garden of shrubs and conifers. Overnight is at the Swan in Lavenham, a wonderful 14th century inn, located in one of England's finest medieval villages. Dinner is included in the hotel tonight.

June 27, Saturday: Cliveden/Hidcote Gardens. Today skirt around London by the north and shop in Cliveden, near Maidenhead, for stroll in the gardens. Cliveden House, now a luxury hotel, was built in 1666 by the Duke of Buckingham. It is in the grand manner, overlooking the Thames and incorporates the familiar balustrade imported in the 1890's from the Vila Borghese in Rome. The water garden, rose garden (designed by Jellicoe) and herbaceous borders are attractive from spring through autumn. The formal gardens with fountains, temples, and statuary are very pleasing. Continue east into the Cotswolds and Chipping Camden where you'll visit Hidcote Manor Garden, one of the finest small (10 acres) gardens in England. It is brilliantly divided by walls and hedges into a series of separate, intimate gardens, each one of totally different character. Check into the Seymour House, a beautifully-restored hotel combining several buildings (including a malt house) dating from about 1700, right in the village. Dinner is included at the hotel tonight.

June 28, Sunday. Painswick Rococo Garden/Stourhead. This morning visit Painswick Rococo Garden with a welcome by Lord Dickinson and lunch in the restaurant on the grounds, hosted by Lord and Lady Dickinson. A lot of effort and money have gone into the restoration of this unique rococo garden. A painting by Thomas Robins is the basis for Painswick's renovation, done in 1748 for Benjamin Hyett who created the garden on the grounds of the house built for his father in 1735. This afternoon drive south to Stourhead near Salisbury. Here we include a visit of this supreme example of the English landscape garden. Henry Hoare I, the banker son of the Lord Mayor of London, built Stourhead in the 1720's. His son, Henry Hoare II, set about creating the

lake, the Temple of Flora and The Grotto. In 1753 the Pantheon was built, and in 1765 the Temple of Apollo followed. It is the greatest surviving garden of its kind. By following a counter clockwise route, a series of Arcadian images are revealed: the boat house,, Temple of Flora, the bridge, Temple of Apollo, Rock Bridge, Cascade, Pantheon, thatched cottage, and grotto. Between 1791 and 1838 Richard Colt Hoare planted many new species, particularly from America--tulip trees, swamp cypresses, Indian bean trees. In 1894 the 6th Baronet replaced many of these with latest kinds of hybrid rhododendrons, azaleas, many copper beeches, conifers such as Japanese white pine, Sitka spruce and California nutmeg,. all of which are record sized specimens now. This evening check into the White Hart in Salisbury. This traditional first class hotel is set in a Georgian building, near the Cathedral.

June 29, Monday. Hillier Gardens/Mottisfont Abbey Garden. Today visit Hillier Gardens, an enormous collection of trees and shrubs, begun in 1953 by the late Sir Harold Hillier. We'll go to Mottisfont Abbey Garden to visit the walled rose garden. Designed by Graham Stuart Thomas, it was only established in 1972, but is already famous. It has one of the most comprehensive collections of old French roses of the nineteenth century. Broad herbaceous borders contain pinks, aubretias, saponarias and many others. It has the largest plane tree in the country as well as a small formal garden designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe. . Return to Salisbury for dinner and overnight.

June 30, Tuesday. Savill Garden/Valley Gardens/Windsor Great Park Today we include a visit to Savill Garden, one of the finest woodland gardens anywhere. It covers about 35 acres and features a fine range of rhododendrons, camellias, magnolia, and hydrangeas which produce a wealth of color at any season. You'll also visit Valley Gardens, also in Windsor Great Park. It was created by Sir Eric Savill, the royal gardener, when he ran out of room in Savill Garden. Before checking into the Woodlands Park Hotel, a country house hotel set in a Victorian house in 10 acres of lawns, we will stop at Priory House, a private home of Jenny Leigh, where she will give you a tour of the garden designed by Percy Cane, followed by tea.. It is located near Woking and the M25 (expressway).

July 1, Wednesday. Hampton Court/Wisely Garden. Visit Hampton Court (unfortunately this will be a week or so before the bigger summer flower show) and Wisely Garden (RHS display garden) today, before the final night at the Woodlands Park Hotel. You must have afternoon tea at Wisley and visit the garden and book store. A farewell dinner is planned at the hotel that evening.

July 2, Thursday: Home to USA. Transfer to London Gatwick for flight home to USA.

Sorry to report, that we have no ball park cost for the trip at press time.