



Perennial Notes

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, Inc.

November 2023



Tricyrtis hirta 'Miyazaki'

Tricyrtis: A Toad in the Garden?

By Glenn Herold, [The Cottage Gardener Blog](#), September 19, 2023

Being called a toad is not exactly a compliment. The amphibious creature that we are all familiar with has warty skin that can exude poison. Calling a person a toad implies that they are contemptible or detestable, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Does that definition carry over to plants as well? Plants of the genus *Tricyrtis* are often called toad-lilies. The most common explanation for the name toadlily is that the flowers and leaves are spotted like toads. Also, the flowers have warty, sack-like (saccate) bumps at the base of the flowers that some think mimics the skin of a toad. These bumps are known as nectaries and, in my opinion, are far removed from toad skin in appearance. Personally, I like the Japanese name for *Tricyrtis*, which is "hototogisu," the name for a

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WHPS coming events!

Questions about our events?

Email wisconsinhps@gmail.com for specific info.

NOTE: In-person meetings are held at Olbrich Gardens, links to Zoom meetings are sent the week of the scheduled meeting.

Wednesday, November 15, 6:30 pm social time, 7 pm - WHPS Meeting (IN PERSON and VIA ZOOM): Horticulture at Lincoln Park Zoo, with speaker Katrina Quint.

Join Katrina Quint, Director of Horticulture at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, IL, for a talk about public horticulture at the zoo, including the management of a garden that sees over 3 million visitors a year. Learn all about the zoo's arboretum and plant collections, as Katrina shares her knowledge with you.



Under her direction, the Horticulture team creates beautiful landscapes inside and outside animal exhibits for both the animals and the public to enjoy. The zoo is home to more than 330 species of woody plants and became an accredited arboretum in 2019. Overall, the zoo's gardens have over 1,000 species of plants under the Horticulture crew's care. The zoo also has special collections of hardy hibiscus, North American native hydrangea, and nine-bark. Katrina's years of public garden experience influence her dedication for providing the highest quality care and maintenance of permanent plantings and annual displays on the zoo's grounds, as well as creating opportunities for the Horticulture team to continue to develop professionally.

Prior to coming to Lincoln Park Zoo, Katrina worked at The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL, for nine years. As the horticulture coordinator, Katrina was in charge of the annual display program, designing and implementing four seasonal displays throughout the display gardens, as well as organizing projects, procuring plants, coordinating staff and contract work, and hiring and training seasonal workers. Her passion for plants and the natural world was sprouted in Ryan, Iowa, where she grew up working with her mother's landscaping business, Ingrid's Landscaping.

Wednesday, December 6, 6:30 pm - social time, 7 pm WHPS Annual Meeting, Seed Exchange and Party, Olbrich Commons. IN-PERSON ONLY WHPS will celebrate the end of the gardening season with a party! Included will be our Annual Meeting, a Seed Exchange, a Trash and Treasure Garden item exchange (bring items you no longer need - decorative pots, tools, garden decor, etc., games, refreshments and more). We have also arranged to have the Olbrich Holiday Express show open for us from 6-7 pm before our meeting.

Wednesday, January 17, 7 pm - WHPS Meeting (ZOOM Meeting Only): Ferns in the Garden, with Speaker Richie Steffen.

Ferns are the ultimate foliage plants. There are few other plants that can provide the grace and beauty that a well-placed fern can provide, yet they are often underused or overlooked as we develop our gardens. Many ferns



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Winter sowing

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Villas Zoo Koi Garden

see p. 9.



Prairie Oaks project update

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WHPS Events (cont. from p.1)

are also pioneer plants and niche growers, inhabiting difficult garden situations including wet soils and dry shade. Richie Steffen, executive director of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden and past president of the Hardy Fern Foundation, will share his tips and techniques for using these plants in the landscape, as well as share some of the best and most beautiful species and selections that will thrive in cold climates.

Few people have a passion for plants or an excitement about gardening more than Richie Steffen. As executive director for the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden, Richie oversees the development of the garden, its programs and the rare plant collections.

His expertise comes from over thirty-five years of experience in the horticultural field, with the last 23 years spent at the Miller Garden. Ferns have become a specialty for him, and he maintains extensive collections at the Miller Garden and his home garden. He has traveled to Europe, Japan, Chile, New Zealand and Costa Rica, as well as numerous trips around the U.S. studying ferns and other plants. He is active in the gardening community and is currently past president of the Hardy Fern Foundation and the Northwest Horticultural Society. A noted lecturer, writer and photographer, Richie is the co-author of the *Plant Lover's Guide to Ferns* with his friend and fern mentor Sue Olsen.

February 9-11, WHPS at the PBS Wisconsin's Garden & Landscape Expo. WHPS will once again host a booth at the Garden Expo, with opportunities for WHPS members to volunteer at the booth for a number of time slots over the three days of the Expo. We are also sponsoring a presentation at the Expo (time and date TBA) with speaker Samantha "Sam" Malone, Horticulturist, Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Sam will offer an Inside Look at Olbrich's Garden Scouts. So put on your bug nerd

hat as she dives into a general overview of Olbrich Botanical Gardens' volunteer team, the Garden Scouts. Learn how they are working to help identify all the small creatures that run the world and why it's so important. You'll learn what plants attract beneficial insects, as well as her top 10 favorite insect-friendly plants. Look for more information to be emailed to members in the next couple of months regarding volunteer opportunities.

Wednesday, February 21, 6:30 pm social time, 7 pm - WHPS Meeting (IN PERSON and via ZOOM): New and Underused Perennials and Grasses, with speaker Brent Horvath. Come learn about

new and underused perennials from a grower with 33 years of experience. Brent will cover some of his favorite perennial plants – whether new or old. Brent Horvath, president and grower of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc., is a third-generation gardener, second-generation nurseryman, and first-generation American. He literally grew up in the business, working for his mom and dad at their companies, Intrinsic



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WHPS Board members can be contacted at wisconsinhps@gmail.com

WHPS Arizona Desert Adventure – February 25-March 2, 2024

It's never too early to start planning for diversions from Wisconsin's winters. By February, most of us will be planting ourselves in front of the latest seed catalogs, dreaming of spring. Alternatively, this winter you could make sunshine and warm weather a reality by joining Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society members in Phoenix and Tucson February 25 – March 2, 2024, for a fascinating horticultural tour led by Jeff Epping.



A garden tour with Jeff is always a treat, and he has teamed up with Country Travel Discoveries to create an itinerary that will brighten your senses and add intriguing details of southwestern flora to your knowledge of very different kinds of native plants. A sneak peek at the week's activities includes visits to both public and private gardens, Saguaro National Park, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, an outdoor desert museum, a visit to a local glass and steel garden artist, a tram ride through Sabino Canyon – and that's just a few highlights. Dinners with outstanding southwestern cuisine at places like dude ranches and former cattle rustlers' hideouts are also included.

If we've piqued your interest, click on this [link](#) to direct you to complete details of daily itineraries, and information on how you can make a reservation to join other Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society members on this "Arizona Desert Adventure."

WHPS Events (cont. from p.2)

Landscaping, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens and Flowers by Intrinsic.

Over the years, he was inspired by the work of great plantsmen such as his father Lajos Horvath, George Radtke, Roy Diblik, Roy Klehm and Alan Bloom. He was encouraged to find plants of his own to introduce, and found his first introduction, *Penstemon d.* 'Pink Dawn' in a field of *Penstemon digitalis*. This discovery led to continued plant selection and hybridizing work in a wide variety of genera. Brent pursued a BS from Oregon State University, and in 1991, started growing finished perennials for the wholesale trade.

Today, Brent has developed over 100 new perennials, including *Andropogon gerardii* 'Blackhawks,' *Pennisetum* 'Red Head,' *Rudbeckia* x 'American Gold Rush,' over 10 *Geum* varieties (such as 'Mai Tai'), and 20 *Sedums* including 'Thundercloud' and 'Pure Joy.' He holds over 60 plant patents. Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc. lists over 500 varieties and sells many more. Main crops include ornamental grasses, *Sedums*, *Geums*, natives and plants for the green roof trade.

Brent's book, *The Plant Lovers Guide to Sedums*, from Timber Press, was released in April 2014, and received a Gold Award from GWA in 2015. In 2016, he was awarded the PPA Grower of the Year award. He also contributes plant articles to horticulture magazines like *Fine Gardening* on select subjects. When Brent is not working, he can be found gardening and traveling.

Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 pm social time, 7 pm - WHPS/MAMGA Meeting (IN PERSON and via ZOOM): The Gardener as Artist, with speaker Nina Koziol.

Nina is a garden writer and horticulturist who tends plants on a deer-infested acre about 40 miles from Chicago. She wrote garden articles for the *Chicago Tribune* for 22 years, as well as for *Chicagoland Gardening*, *Old House Journal*, *Organic Gardening*, *Fine Gardening*, *The Landscape Contractor* and *The American Gardener*. She has taught horticulture, design and residential landscape design history at the Chicago Botanic Garden and The Morton Arboretum since 1997. She also has two books coming out in Spring, 2024: *White Gardens* and *Small Kitchen Gardens*. Nina was born in Paris, France, to a father who was a life-long, decorated military photographer. He met her mother in England during WWII. Her interest in gardening stems from her English mother. "My grandparents had an incredible garden in Chelmsford, Essex, England, with a lovely greenhouse, rock garden and a pond my grandfather built. I credit my love of all things gardening – plants, birds, insects and clouds – to my mum, who encouraged me at age seven to do my science project on the parts of an *Impatiens* flower. After that, I was hooked." NOTE: This is a joint meeting with the Madison Area Master Gardener Association.



Wednesday, April 17, 6:30 pm social time, 7 pm - WHPS Meeting (IN PERSON and via ZOOM): A Gardening Journey - Olbrich to Epic Gardens, with Speaker Jeff Epping.

When Nancy Ragland brought Jeff Epping on board at Olbrich Botanical Gardens in 1993 and shared her dream of creating a world-class botanical garden in Madison, little did Jeff



know that he'd be spending the next 28 years on the journey to make her vision become a reality. Join Jeff in looking back to the beginning and through the years, as he and many talented individuals joined together to slowly, but surely, transform the lawn-laden landscape into the award-winning, intricate and beautiful garden that it is today. Over the last 18 of those 28 years, Jeff also worked with Judy Faulkner and her team of skilled and creative professionals to craft one of the most remarkable corporate landscapes in the country – Epic Systems in Verona. He'll share some of that gardening journey as well.

Jeff Epping started Epping Design & Consulting in 2009 and just recently retired after 28 years serving as Director of Horticulture at Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, Wisconsin, where he has always practiced and preached environmentally conscious gardening. His designs put plants at the forefront to create gardens that are not only beautiful, but also ecologically sound, providing habitat for insects, birds and all the wild creatures they help support. His garden designs celebrate the region, support nature, enhance the senses and satisfy one's innate desire to connect with the natural world.

A native of southern Wisconsin and graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Epping holds bachelor's and master's degrees in Ornamental Horticulture and regularly lectures and teaches throughout the country on great garden plants and designs for northern gardens. His garden designs have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Fine Gardening* and *Southern Living*, among others, and he's been interviewed on many local radio and television programs, as well as numerous podcasts. He just recently received the Award of Merit from the American Public Gardens Association for his contributions to public horticulture over his career, and his home garden was recently featured in *American Roots*, written by Nick and Allison McCullough and Teressa Woodard.

May 2024 - WHPS Plant Sale - DATE and TIME TBA. Look for more info in January newsletter.

Upcoming Calendar NOTE: WHPS will begin scheduling Member Workshops again in 2024. The Workshops will be listed in future newsletters, along with info sent in emails to members.

DUES

Please don't renew yet! About half of our WHPS members pay dues for multiple years and it's pretty hard to remember if you owe dues or not. Memberships are for the calendar year.

In late December, we will send an email to every member letting them know they either need to renew or they paid ahead last year. So you don't have to wonder if you need to renew or not.

We give everyone plenty of time and multiple reminders before we update our membership list in March.

Winter Sowing 101

by WHPS Board Member Caroline Bohler, owner, Homegrown Madison

I am absolutely smitten with winter sowing. Gone are the days of grow lights, leggy seedlings and hardening off – I just steal a few containers from my recycling bin and let Mother Nature work her magic.

Winter sowing uses everyday containers and natural light, warmth and moisture to germinate seeds outdoors at the appropriate time. After the initial prep, it is very hands-off and remarkably easy. The containers protect the seedlings from extreme temperature swings, retain moisture and gradually harden off the plants, with no input required.

How to Winter Sow

Prep your containers.

Milk jugs are the most popular choice, but water jugs, produce clamshells and even plastic totes are a viable choice. As long as it lets in light, traps heat and moisture, and can withstand Wisconsin winter weather, it should work for winter sowing.

Whatever container you choose, you'll need a "top" for easy access and drainage holes. For milk jugs, this means cutting around three of the sides, leaving a hinge to keep the two parts connected, and poking some drainage holes in the bottom. Kitchen shears are my weapon of choice for this prep.

Plant your seeds. Fill your container with moist, lightweight potting mix – you'll want at least 4" so plants can establish proper roots. I line the bottom of the container with newspaper to keep the soil better contained, but this isn't necessary. Plant your seeds according to germination instructions for each particular plant – scattered on the soil, lightly covered or planted at a particular depth.

Seal and label your containers.

Milk jugs and similar containers need to be sealed around the middle, to keep them closed and retain heat/moisture. Some people swear by duct tape, but I like clear shipping tape for this task. Containers with ready-made "tops" just need to be closed tightly. Once they are sealed up, be sure to write the contents directly on the container – seedlings look awfully similar when they first sprout.

Place your containers outside and wait.

Put the containers outside, somewhere they won't blow away or be bothered by animals, and let mother nature work her magic. You can completely ignore the containers until late March/April, when things start to warm up a bit.

You can prep, plant, seal and place your containers all winter long (unless your seeds require a certain stratification period) – generally any time from mid-December through late March/April. It's a great activity to fill some "off-season" time.



Set your planted containers outside.

Monitor your containers.

With warmer days, you'll want to keep an eye on the potting soil, to make sure your seeds have enough moisture to germinate. If it's been a wet spring, you may be just fine, but if not you should water your containers from below (place them in standing water so they absorb through the drainage holes, rather than spraying from above) so as not to disturb the seeds. A garden flat with no drainage holes is ideal, but a roasting pan or even rimmed cookie sheet will do in a pinch.



Monitor your seeds to make sure they have enough moisture.

Before too long, you'll see some germination. Germination requirements vary widely between plants, so don't worry if some containers are lagging behind. Continue to monitor moisture levels, but don't begin opening the containers until the plants are quite large (running out of space) or the days are consistently pushing 65° – trust in the magic of your mini-greenhouses.

Some people open and close their greenhouses daily for the first few weeks of warm weather, but I like the truly hands-off method of waiting as long as possible, then leaving them open indefinitely.

Plant your seedlings.

Once the planting requirements of a particular plant have been met (check that soil temp) you are ready to plant. Winter-sown plants are already hardened off and generally a reasonable size, which makes planting a breeze. My most common issue is sowing too densely, but I've found that even tightly packed seedlings transplant without any issues – just tear off a chunk and water well.



Cut around 3 sides of the container, leaving a hinge.



Seal with tape and mark with variety.

2023 – Other gardening events of note

Key events of interest listed but please visit the following websites for more info on events:

- [Allen Centennial Garden](#) in Madison
- [Boerner Botanical Gardens](#) in Milwaukee
- [Chicago Botanic Garden](#) in Chicago
- [Green Bay Botanical Garden](#) in Green Bay
- [Lynden Sculpture Garden](#) in Milwaukee
- [Mitchell Park Horticultural Park \(The Domes\)](#) in Milwaukee
- [Monk Botanical Garden](#) in Wausau
- [Morton Arboretum](#) in Lisle, IL
- [Olbrich Botanical Gardens](#) in Madison
- [Paine Art Center and Gardens](#) in Oshkosh
- [Rotary Botanical Gardens](#) in Janesville
- [University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum](#)

Saturday, November 4, 10 am - 4 pm, 41st Madison Herb Fair, Madison Herb Society, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison. Speakers, vendors, and more. More info [here](#).

Thursday, November 9, 5:30 pm, (Virtual) Pots with Panache, Nina Koziol, at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison. Join us as we explore pots, potting mixes, planting techniques, maintenance, and a variety of plants to create four-season interest. \$24 / \$19 Olbrich member.

Wednesday, November 15, 5:30 pm, (Virtual) Seasonal Guide to Caring for Trees, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison. This virtual workshop will explore the different seasonal needs of trees, from the roots to the canopy. Join us to learn proper timing for disease and insect management as well as pruning. \$15 / \$12 member. Register by Nov. 8.

Thursday, Nov. 16, 6:30 pm, Planting a Prairie: Choose Your Own Adventure!, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison. This lecture will outline the process of prairie establishment and help you chart a course that fits the needs of your site. \$25 / \$20 member.

Friday, November 17, 6-9 pm, Handmade for the Holidays: Teens Edition, Riveredge Nature Center, Saukville. Channel your inner DIY skills and join us for a day of creativity and handmade fun!

Teens are exclusively invited to try new crafts and create one of a kind gifts to be shared over the holiday season. More [info](#).

Saturday, November 18, 12-4 pm, Handmade for the Holidays: A Gift-Making Gathering, Riveredge Nature Center, Saukville. Join us for a day filled with holiday cheer and festive gift making! Children of all ages are invited to craft seasonal creations inspired by nature. Each child can make and take home multiple projects. More [info](#).

Saturday, November 18 - Sunday, January 7, 9 am-5 pm, Holiday Show: A Holiday Snow Globe, Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee. See website for detailed times and admission fees.

Sunday, November 19, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm, All About Seeds Family Nature Program, UW Arboretum. This program is a fun, fascinating way for families with children elementary age and younger to explore the natural world. Free, no registration required. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Friday, November 24 - Saturday, December 30, 4:30-9 pm, WPS Garden of Lights, Green Bay Botanical Garden, Green Bay. Bask in the glow of 350,000 lights across 40 enchanting nature-themed displays! See GBG website for specific dates and ticket details.

Friday, November 24 – Monday, January 8, 10 am – 4 pm, Nutcracker in the Castle, Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh. See website for specific dates and ticket details. Reservations recommended.

Sunday, November 26, 1–2 pm, Garden Stroll, UW Arboretum. Learn about the land, plants, animals, fungi, phenology, and ecology. Free, no registration required. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Saturday, December 2, 9 am-3 pm, Holiday Boutique & Bakery, Hawthorn Hollow Nature Sanctuary & Arboretum, Kenosha. More [info](#).

Saturday, December 2, 2023 – Sunday, December 31, 2023, 10 am–4 pm Daily, Holiday Express Model Train & Flower Show, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison. \$8 - Adults, \$5 - Children 6 & up, FREE - Children 5 & under, FREE - Olbrich Members.

Winter Sowing (cont. from p.4)

What to Winter Sow

Winter sowing works well for early veggies, herbs and annual flowers (think greens, brassicas, dill, fennel, oregano, bachelor's buttons, cosmos, marigolds, love-in-a-mist and more) that can handle cool temps. For tropicals (tomatoes, peppers, basil and the like) you'll want to stick with your indoor set-up or buy seedlings – it's hard to get the consistent heat they need to germinate and thrive with this method.

Winter sowing is also a fabulous way to start perennials from seed, particularly natives that require stratification (a cold period) before germination.

A few bi-annuals/perennials to consider for winter sowing.

Asclepias (Milkweed), *Asters*, *Baptisia*, *Digitalis* (Foxglove), *Echinacea* (Coneflower), *Eutrochium purpureum* (Joe Pye Weed), *Hysop*, *Liatris*, *Lupine*, *Monarda* (Bee Balm), *Penstemon*, *Rudbeckia* (Black and Brown-eyed Susan), *Solidago* (Goldenrod), *Vernonia* (Ironweed), Yarrow all start well with this method.

Once you try winter sowing, you'll never return to starting plants inside – mark my words!

Prairie Oaks: Year Four

By Emily Buckingham

This article is a continuation of an annual series chronicling prairie and woodland restoration efforts on the eight acres south of Verona we purchased in 2019.

In June, we moved into our newly constructed dream home on our land. It's a contemporary ranch with an exposed basement and, at least in the summer, we can't see any neighbors' houses from our windows. Living out here is absolutely wonderful, but wow, was it a long, intense process to build a house. There were countless decisions to make and I never want to do it again!



A walk through the prairie.

It was especially hard for me to watch the unavoidable, terrible disturbance to the soil and plants. Yes, many of the plants disturbed were invasive, but the mature honeysuckle situation was stable and we have learned how to deal with it in a way that does not stimulate explosive weed growth. Not to mention there were some beautiful natives not found elsewhere on the property including prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*), blood milkwort (*Polygala sanguinea*), and a substantial patch of ground cedar (*Diphysastrum digitatum*). A friend and I transplanted everything we could before we broke ground and these plants were destroyed. I chose to stay away from the building site for the first few months, rather than witness the destruction. Once the house took shape, it was a little easier to be there.



Campanula americana first year plants.

Now that we're moved in and final grading is done, we've been working on getting something green to grow around the house so we can get our erosion control deposit back from the county. I tried really hard to have the builder avoid bringing in any foreign soil, but it was ultimately necessary to build the septic mound. No surprise, that



Gravel garden after 22 tons of gravel added.

soil has a huge weed seed bank. We naively scattered Prairie Moon Nursery's Eco Grass seed near the house and a prairie mix on the septic mound that my husband faithfully watered for weeks, but what germinated is mainly velvetleaf and massive quantities of non-native grasses. For now, we're attempting to mow the plants that come up to keep them from going to seed with the plan of killing everything and reseeding in the fall/winter.



Next year – gravel garden with natives.

I had hoped to conduct my first prescribed burn on the .75-acre prairie we've been restoring since 2020. Unfortunately, our well wasn't ready in time and my knowledgeable helpers thought it best to wait until next spring. I continued hand pulling wild parsnip, white sweet clover, and Queen Anne's lace and cutting small brush resprouts. The whole prairie seems shorter and less full of flowers this year, which I'm hoping is due to the drought. Even so, I'm seeing native plants filling in bare spots and I'm optimistic we'll be able to burn next spring.



Family dinner outside.

In the woods, I saw a noticeable and highly encouraging decline in garlic mustard in the areas I've been tending since 2020. For the third year in a row, the stream again stopped flowing in late June, though the woods remains fairly moist and the jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) still abounds. The blackberries are gladly filling in the space that was once honeysuckle. In my woodland garden, I'm learning which natives I planted are happiest. Tall bellflower (*Campanula americana*), a biennial, reseeded exuberantly and will need to be



The prairie, year four.

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Prairie Oaks (cont. from p.6)

thinned. Wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphylum* (not quite native to WI, but to northern IL), great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), spring beauty (*Claytonia virginiana*), plantain-leaved sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*) and early meadow rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*) have all reseeded nicely, allowing me to move them around. I've learned that deer love false Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*) and Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), such that I rarely get to see blooms. Strangely, the deer have mostly left my trilliums alone.

We have seen all kinds of wildlife including foxes, twin deer fawns the kids named Violet and Chase, a groundhog who lives in the dirt pile outside my office, numerous butterflies, bluebird babies hatched during this summer's two successful nestings,

and red-headed and pile-ated woodpeckers among many other birds.

Next spring I'll plant a gravel garden in the 1100 sq. ft. area between a two-level retaining wall and the driveway. I am excited to try this low-maintenance method of gardening with native prairie plants. If you've tried it, send me your tips!



Future gravel garden.

In Remembrance



Erwin "Erv" Frederick Koenig – August 31, 1935 – March 30, 2023

Long-time WHPS member Erv Koenig passed away on March 30. Erv was born on August 31, 1935, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In the first year of Erv's life, his mother, Clara Marie, clipped a page from a magazine with a young boy dreaming of his future and above

him floated all the possibilities a person could grow up and become. One of them was "Doctor", which ultimately became his calling, graduating with honors from what is now the Medical College of Wisconsin. After serving in the US Army in 1961 in Korea as a physician, Erv moved to Madison and ultimately took a position with the University of Wisconsin as a clinical professor of Medicine and began his lifelong position as a physician at UW Health Services. Erv married his wife Candy in 1966 and they

eventually settled into a home on Lakewood Boulevard in Maple Bluff, where they raised their three children.

After 30 years with UW Health Services, he retired and became an avid gardener, developing his own garden at home, knowing all the scientific names of the plants he cultivated, as well as volunteering at Olbrich Gardens. He also joined WHPS, attending meetings and becoming a regular dig host and contributor of plants to the WHPS Plant Sale, including many varieties of hosta and ferns and, a particular favorite, *Lamiastrum* 'Herman's Pride.'

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Candace, and son, Brian. He is survived and missed by his eldest son, Jeffrey "Jabo" Koenig; daughter, Melinda Chopra; son-in-law, Karn Chopra; and grandchildren: Jaya, Aakash, and Neena Chopra.

We offer our sincere condolences to Erv's immediate and extended family and friends.



Deborah Kucken – July 26, 1949 – September 11, 2023

WHPS member Deb Kucken passed away September 11 at the age of 74. She was born and lived her life in Fort Atkinson, WI, where she lived with her husband Richard (whom she lost in 2017) and her four children Amy, Laura, Michael and Brad.

Deb began her nursing career at the Fort Atkinson Memorial Hospital as a Certified Nursing Assistant in the intensive care unit, later transitioning to the medical-surgical unit. In 1991, she joined the cardiac intensive care unit at William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Administration Hospital in Madison. After enjoying 20 years on staff, she retired in 2011.

Following retirement, Deb earned her Master Gardener Certification, volunteered with Rotary Botanical Gardens, and was a member since 2003 of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society and a member of Olbrich Botanical Gardens. She created a backyard oasis, the setting of many happy memories, and in 2020 won

top prize in the Friends of Rose Lake Backyard Wildlife contest. Henry Vilas Zoo acknowledged the hard work and dedication of garden volunteer Marge Weiland (Deb's close friend, co-worker at the VA Hospital and Master Gardener partner) by naming the renovated pond and its surrounding gardens The Koi Pond in honor of Deb Kucken.

She was also an accomplished quilter and cross-stitcher, involved with multiple quilting clubs and numerous cross-stitch communities. She also knit and donated hats for the infusion center patients at the VA Hospital in Madison.

A perfect day for Deb included talking with family and friends, gardening, quilting or cross-stitching, then winding down with the Hallmark Channel and a good book, dogs by her side.

Deb's family requests that donations be made in memory of Deb Kucken to the Henry Vilas Zoo horticulture program through 608-266-4732; or the [Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society](#).

Tricyrtis (cont. from p.1)

shy forest-dwelling bird. Even the “lily” part of the common name is a bit misleading. *Tricyrtis* is in the Liliaceae, the lily family, but true lilies are in the genus *Lilium*. *Tricyrtis* may be shy, but it’s a powerhouse in the fall garden.

Toadlilies are shade-loving herbaceous perennials native from the Himalayas to East Asia, including China, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. They are found on shady, rocky cliffs and stream banks, and along the edges of forests. *Tricyrtis* is almost always found where rainfall is plentiful, though I have found them to be quite drought tolerant once established. The genus consists of about 20 species, but most plants in commerce are either *Tricyrtis formosana* or *Tricyrtis hirta*, or hybrids of the two. Other species may not be hardy in Wisconsin.

Tricyrtis hirta, the hairy toadlily, is the most cold hardy species of the genus. As the name implies, leaves are hairy, arranged ladder-like along unbranched stems. The plant spreads slowly to form a clump. Flowers have a white or pale purple back color and are covered with darker purple spots and blotches. They are between one and one and a half inches wide and have the appearance of an orchid flower. Bloom time is from mid-September to mid-October. Because of the small flower size and detailed coloration, they are best used where they may be viewed close up. Hairy toadlily varies in height from one to three feet.

Tricyrtis formosana, the Formosa toadlily, is not as cold hardy as *Tricyrtis hirta*, but readily hybridizes with it, resulting in numerous cultivars that are reliably hardy in Southern Wisconsin. Unlike the hairy toadlily, it spreads with lateral stems to form a colony, but not so rapidly that it is invasive. Flowers open over a longer period of time than *Tricyrtis hirta*, usually continuing until a hard frost ceases flower production.

While purple is the normal flower color, *Tricyrtis macrantha* is a species with yellow flowers. Unfortunately, it is only hardy to Zone 6, making it less than reliable even in Southeast Wisconsin. If you can plant it in a protected area, though, the striking flowers make it worth trying.

I grow five cultivars of *Tricyrtis* in my garden. *Tricyrtis* ‘Miyazaki’ is about 18 inches tall and has purple flowers with white spots. It is very floriferous and was a top pick in trials at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Some list it as a cultivar of *Tricyrtis hirta*, while others consider it a hybrid with *Tricyrtis formosana*. ‘Blue Wonder’ is a hybrid with flowers that are light purple with darker purple spots. *Tricyrtis* ‘Tojen,’ another hybrid, has leaves that are larger than the typical toadlily. The orchid-lavender flowers are mostly terminal, rather than in the axils of the leaves, and are unspotted. Bright green leaves are contrasted with burgundy stems. ‘Lightning Strike’ has golden foliage streaked with green. Lavender flowers are produced at the top of two-foot-tall stems. My most recent acquisition is *Tricyrtis formosana* ‘Autumn Glow.’ A wide yellow margin on the dark green leaves makes it a standout in the garden. A cultivar that I don’t grow, but have been impressed with in other locations, is ‘White Lightning,’ a cultivar of *Tricyrtis hirta*. It is a vigorous, upright grower with pure white flowers all along the stems in the axils of the leaves. The white flowers are a beacon in the shade garden.

Toadlily is a great companion for *Hostas*, ferns, *Astilbe*, hellebores, *Heuchera*, and spring blooming wildflowers. It is resistant to deer browsing, but rabbits may find new shoots to their liking. For a fall blooming shade plant, it can’t be beat.



Tricyrtis ‘Blue Wonder’



Tricyrtis formosana ‘Autumn Glow’



Tricyrtis ‘Tojen’



Tricyrtis ‘Miyazaki’



Tricyrtis formosana ‘Gilt Edge’



Tricyrtis formosana ‘Samurai’

Open Gardens in 2023

— Jane LaFlash

Do you enjoy walking through your garden in winter, with its exposure to the shapes and structure that are normally enveloped by the lush foliage that the other seasons provide? Would you like to invite others to enjoy it as well? All you have to do is contact us a few days to a week (or more) ahead at wisconsinhps@gmail.com with your name, address, a short description of your garden and the date and times your garden will be open, and we will send out an email invitation to our members. Feel free to email us with any questions.

Thank you to members who hosted open gardens this year: Jane LaFlash, Ed Feige, Janet Aaberg, Rosemary and Tom Kleinheinz, Tom Cottington, Linda and Bruce Christensen, Jean and Ken Nordlund, Kathy and Jeff Epping, and Jean and John Mathews. Being a Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society member includes our willingness to get out and enjoy what the “quiet” season has to offer in beauty and inspiration.

WHPS new members

The following members have recently joined WHPS:

Kathleen Archer, Oregon, WI; Taylor Blair, Madison, WI; Karen and Jerry Cook, Madison, WI; Bernadette Elam, Evanston, IL; Lynn Erickson, McFarland, WI; Maureen Wild Gordon, Oregon, WI; Steffi Greene, Madison, WI; Christine Morgan, Pardeeville, WI; Amanda Mravec, Madison, WI; Gail Schauer, Fitchburg, WI; Jeanne Smith, Madison, WI; Debi Whitley, Madison, WI.

Welcome!

Help Us Raise Needed Money!
Bloomin' Bucks
with Brent and Becky's

Your Shopping Matters

Bloomin' Bucks with Brent and Becky's Bulbs is a progressive fundraising program designed to earn select nonprofit organizations cash for every order received through the Brent and Becky's Bulbs website! WHPS is one of the participating 387 organizations, and last year we received \$343.49 in donations. Thanks to our members and other shoppers for shopping at Brent & Becky's and for selecting WHPS for your support!

To participate, simply visit bloominbucks.com and select “Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society” and hit “GO” to be sent to the Brent and Becky's website Bloomin Bucks.



Have questions about your membership?
Contact Chris Neumann at wisconsinhps@gmail.com or see [membership information](#).

A brief tour of the Deborah Kucken Koi Pond Garden

by Stephanie O'Neal, President

In 2022, WHPS awarded the Henry Vilas Zoo \$1500 to make plantings and improvements to the scrub land surrounding the zoo's koi pond, which is located just inside Gate 9 and can be seen from the entry bridge and via access points after entering the Children's Zoo. This year, several WHPS members also contributed some of their own plants to the project, including WHPS member Deborah Kucken, for whom the garden is now named. I was fortunate to have Marge Weiland, a volunteer who helps coordinate the project, give me an up-close tour of the garden on October 16, including some of the conifers and plants that were purchased with the grant. The sun garden plantings of asters, coneflower, butterfly bush and Hydrangea next to the bridge (that were planted earlier this year) were looking particularly vibrant.



View of Villas Zoo Koi Garden from bridge.

According to Marge, the project would appreciate additional donations of part shade/shade plants for around the koi pond and other areas, including hostas and sedums, but also plants like *Epimediums*, *Tiarelles*, *Corydalis*, *Pulmonaria*, *Columbine*, lady or maidenhair ferns, *Heuchera villosa*, etc. Sun perennials may be useful in other areas. Plans are underway to dredge the koi pond in early spring to increase the visual depth of the pond.



Sun garden – Hydrangea, coneflower, butterfly bush.

You can contact Marge Weiland or Valerie McGoldrick, the zoo horticulturist, about a donation. Marge said she is often able to either pick up or dig plants for people if needed. If you would like to volunteer to work on the gardens at the Henry Vilas Zoo, you can contact Valerie via email at McGoldrick.Valerie@henryvilaszoo.gov or via phone/text at 952-221-0591. Marge Weiland can be reached at margeryweiland@outlook.com or 608-228-8685.



Zinnias and perennials near overlook of pond.

And don't forget to stop by the koi pond to see the new plantings next spring, summer and fall!



Garden at Gate 9 entrance to zoo.