



Perennial Notes

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, Inc.

January 2024



Phlox paniculata 'Jeana'

2024 Perennial Plant of the Year - Phlox paniculata 'Jeana'

Reprinted from Perennial Plant Association [announcement](#)

'Jeana' is an exceptional garden phlox renowned for its impressive flower show, tall sturdy habit, and pollinator-friendliness. Dense, domed trusses crown stiff stems from midsummer to early fall. Individually, the fragrant lavender-pink flowers are significantly smaller than typical garden phlox — only about half an inch wide — but the show at peak is eye-popping, nonetheless. This is a case where bigger is not better, from a pollinator's perspective anyhow. In trials at Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware, the nectar-rich flowers of 'Jeana' attracted more butterflies — Eastern Tiger Swallowtails were especially plentiful — than any other garden phlox in their study. Hummingbirds and other pollinators are fans too.

(continued on page 10)

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, 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 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.

Thursday, January 18, 1-4 pm - WHPS Member Workshop: Felco/ARS Pruner Cleanup and Sharpening. WHPS member Betsy True's Workshop will show you the equipment and techniques that can make you more confident and capable of taking care of this important garden tool. Bring your Felco or ARS bypass pruners in need of maintenance and leave knowing you are ready to tackle your 2024 pruning chores. Attendance limited through Eventbrite registration. **NOTE: THIS EVENT IS FULL with a waiting list.**



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** (online signup sheet will be sent via email to members soon). We are also sponsoring a presentation at the Expo on **Saturday**,

(continued on page 2)



Southern blight

see p. 9.



Cyclamen in WI?

see p. 6.



President's message

see p. 6.

WHPS Events (cont. from p.1)

February 10 at 1 pm in Mendota 1-2, An Inside Look at Olbrich's Garden Scouts with speaker Samantha "Sam" Malone. Sam is a Horticulturist at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. So put on your bug nerd hat as she dives into a general overview of Olbrich Botanical Gardens' volunteer team known as the Garden Scouts. Learn how they are working to help identify all the small creatures that run the world and why this work is so important. You'll learn what plants attract beneficial insects, as well as her top ten favorite insect-friendly plants. We hope you will be able to attend this presentation, and don't forget to stop by the WHPS booth and say hello!

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 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 Gar-*

(continued on page 3)



2545 Dahle St, Madison, WI 53704

President, Stephanie O'Neal, 608-256-6108, Publications/ Newsletter Committee., Grants Committee, Facebook Committee, Tech Committee

Vice President, Caroline Bohler, Webmaster, Plant Sale Committee, Facebook Committee, Program Tech Committee

Secretary, Lynn Belanger, Garden Expo Committee, Grants Committee

Treasurer, Diane Scharkey, Plant Sale Committee

Sally Averkamp, 608-235-9084, Newsletter Committee, Newsletter layout

Anna DePauw, Plant Sale Committee

Andrea Diss-Torrance, Communications Co-coordinator

Mark Dwyer, Plant Sale Committee, Program Committee

Frank Greer, Grants Committee, Program Committee

Alissa Karnaky, Newsletter Committee, Facebook Committee, Program Tech Committee

JoAnne Kriege, Garden Tours Coordinator

Mary Ellen La Chance, Communications Co-coordinator, Newsletter Committee

Rebecca LaRose, Program Committee, Plant Sale Committee

Linda Marx, Program Committee, Hospitality

Chris Neumann, Membership Coordinator, Newsletter Committee, Plant Sale Committee, Program Tech Committee

Kitty Rankin, Grants Committee, Newsletter Committee

Cheri Schweitzer, Olbrich Liaison, Garden Expo Committee

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

Friends of the Arboretum, Inc.

Native Plant Sale

- Plants for sun or shade
- Trees and shrubs
- Garden kits
- Journey North pollinator patch
- citizen science kits

All proceeds benefit the UW-Madison Arboretum!



Order Plants Online

from Jan 1 – March 31
at foamadison.org
curbside pickup in May

Browse the Tent Sale

Saturday, May 18
10am – 2pm
(9am for Friends of the Arboretum)
on the UW-Arboretum lawn in front
of the Visitor Center

Order online at foamadison.org
or scan the QR code



Questions or need help ordering? Email Lily Butler (npscordinator@foamadison.org) or call (608) 890-2555 and leave a message.

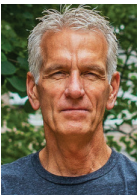
WHPS Events (cont. from p.2)

dening 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 19, 2024 - WHPS Spring Plant Sale - 10 am-2 pm, West Madison Agricultural Research Station. Join us for the WHPS Spring Plant Sale featuring Intrinsic Perennials, Agrecol Native Plant Nursery and Taylor Creek Restoration Nurseries on Sunday, May 19th. The sale will feature gorgeous perennials selected by Brent Horvath of [Intrinsic Perennial Gardens](#) and over 100 varieties of native plugs from [Agrecol Native Plant Nursery](#) and [Taylor Creek Restoration Nurseries](#). There will be something for every gardener - sun lovers, shade plants, hard-to-find natives and grasses, pollinator magnets and more! A complete list of plugs will be available before the sale. The sale will take place at the [West Agricultural Research Station \(8502 Mineral Point Rd\)](#) just two blocks west of Menards.

Saturday, June 22 (time TBD), Tour of Landscape Designs Nursery. There is no better way to spend a Saturday morning in the summer than exploring a wonderful nursery. So plan to join fellow WHPS gardeners on June 22 in McFarland for a tour of Landscape Designs Inc. with owner Steve Lesch. His expansive nursery includes a large number of hardy native, nativar as well as hybrid nativar plants from North America. In addition to purchasing finished stock, he also annually grows about 15,000 herbaceous perennials and woody ornamentals. Steve has an abundance of background knowledge on his plants which makes a tour with him an engaging learning experience. Best of all, you are unlikely to leave empty handed as Steve is extending a generous 20% discount on his plants at the conclusion of the tour.

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.

Open Gardens in 2024

Would you like to invite others to enjoy your garden for a different view in winter, or as it comes to life in early spring? 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. 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.

2024 – 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](#)

Wednesday, January 17, 12 pm, Winter Sowing 101 (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Join us for an enlightening Winter Sowing workshop, where you'll learn the art of sowing seeds outdoors during the winter months without expensive equipment or constant management! Fee: \$24 / \$18 member. Register by January 10.

Starting Saturday, January 20, 2024, 10-11:30 am, Allen Centennial Garden Winter Presentation Series. Three Saturday morning sessions, one each in January, February and March. Free for Friends of ACG members; \$15 for the general public.

- **January 20, 2024. Theory and Traditions behind Islamic Garden Design: The Roman Precedents (Virtual), with Kathryn Gleason.** Gleason is Professor Emeritus, Landscape Architecture, Cornell University.
- **February 17, 2024. Maintaining and Developing English Gardens: A focus on the magic behind Hidcote Manor Garden and William Shakespeare's Gardens with Bertie Swainston (Virtual).** Swainston is a horticulturist at the Royal Horticultural Society, Harlow Carr, England.
- **March 16, 2024. Designing Your Home Landscape with Christopher Sina,** Horticulture Building, UW-Madison. Sina is a Landscape Architect, Saiki Design, Madison.

Saturday, January 20 - Sunday, Mar 17, times vary, Train Show: Toyblox: Tiny Toy Towns, Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee.

Sunday, January 21, 10 am-2 pm, Winterfest 2024, Boerner Botanical Gardens, Hales Corners. Winterfest - cure your winter cabin fever with indoor activities, guided winter walks and more. Walks begin at 11:00 and 12:30 and last approximately 45 minutes. Free event! Call 414-525-5653 for more information.

Starting Monday, January 22, 1-2 pm, Ask the Experts: A Monthly Online Garden and Landscape Q&A Series, UW-Madison Extension, Horticulture Program. These sessions are your chance to ask questions about your trees and shrubs, garden vegetables and ornamentals, and lawn. Whether it's about plant diseases, pesky insects, or the selection and general care of plants in and around your home, our panel of seasoned experts will provide you with insightful answers. All sessions are on Mondays, 1-2 pm. Additional dates: Feb. 19, March 18, April 22, May 20, June 17, July 22, Aug. 19, Sept. 23, Oct. 21, Nov. 18 and Dec. 16. Registration required. More info (<https://bit.ly/47zheec>)

Thursday, January 25, 5:30 pm, Virtual Lecture Series: A World of Discovery: How Science and Heart Can Make You a More Ecological Gardener with Nancy Lawson. Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Fee: \$15/\$12 member. Register by January 23.

Friday, January 26, 1-3 pm, Container Gardening for Flowers, Foliage, and Food

PLANT SALES

Monday, January 1 - Sunday, March 31, Annual Online Native Plant Sale, Friends of the Arboretum, UW-Madison Arboretum, Madison. Shop online at <https://foamadison.org/shop/>

Wednesday, February 7-14, 8 am - 4 pm daily Cacti & Succulent Sale, Edgerton Hospital, 11101 N. Sherman Rd, Edgerton, WI. Fundraiser for the Healing Garden.

Tuesday, April 16 – Monday, May 6, Daily Perennial Plant Sale (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Our 2024 online Perennial Plant Sale features a selection of tried and true perennial varieties from Walters Gardens and Midwest Groundcovers. Olbrich's horticulturists carefully select unique plants that do best in this climate. Find the newest, hardiest, most disease-resistant cultivars on the market! Sale goes live on April 16 at 10 am.

Saturday, May 18, 2024, 9 am-noon, Ozaukee Master Gardeners 2024 Plant Sale, Ozaukee Master Gardeners, Ozaukee Co. Fairgrounds: Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Expo Center, Cedarburg. More info at www.ozaukeemastergardeners.org/annual-plant-sale

Saturday, May 18, 2024 Plant Sale, Outagamie County Master Gardener Association (details to follow).

with Heather Prince (Virtual). Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Prince is from Fearless Gardening. Gather inspiration for fresh container designs from traditional to contemporary. We'll also cover container growing basics including watering, drainage, composition, winter care, scale, and much more. Fee: \$28 / \$23 member. Register by January 19.

Saturday, Sunday, February 3 - 4, 10 am - 3 pm, Orchid Quest., Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. The Orchid Growers Guild will present orchid exhibits, vendors, seminars, and plenty of advice for orchid growers. More info. (<https://orchidgrowersguild.org/orchidquest>)

Wednesday, February 7, 6-8 pm, Sustainable Success at Olbrich Gardens At Olbrich (Virtual), Erin Presley, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Erin Presley, a horticulturist at Olbrich for ten years, walks you through our best practices for attracting and supporting insect life, managing weeds, building soil, and saving water on a scale that is adaptable to whatever space you garden in. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by January 31.

Thursday, February 8, 9-10:30 am, The Tallgrass Prairie in Early America: The Center of Everything Winter Enrichment Lecture (Virtual), with Bob Morrissey. Morrissey is Professor at the University of Illinois Department of History, hosted by the UW Arboretum, Madison. Morrissey will explore the tallgrass prairie region (the modern corn belt) of North America and its remarkable premodern indigenous history, and how people and non-human nature shaped each other during the early generations of European colonization. Fee: \$10. Register by February 4.

Tuesday, February 13, 6 pm-7:15 pm, Secret Ingredients to Olbrich's Annual Containers (Virtual), with Avery Pronschinske. Pronschinske is with the Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. This virtual presentation will give you the inside scoop on how Olbrich's horticulturists create their amazing seasonal container plant displays! "Recipes" describing each container will be included. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by February 6.

(continued on page 5)

Other Events (cont. from p.4)

Thursday, February 15, 9–10:30 am, Invasive Forest Insects and Diseases in and on the Way to Wisconsin Winter Enrichment (Virtual) with Mike Hillstrom. Hillstrom is a Forest Health Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, hosted by the UW Arboretum, Madison. Many invasive insects and diseases are impacting the health of Wisconsin's forests, including spongy moth, emerald ash borer, oak wilt, and others. Fee: \$10. Register by February 11.

Saturday, February 17, 9 am-5 pm, Winter Celebration, Green Bay Botanical Garden, Green Bay. Don't let the weather keep you in – celebrate the season at the Garden with your family! Join us for a free event in the Wisconsin outdoors.

Sunday, February 18, 1:30–3:30 pm, Extraordinary Evergreens Family Nature Program, UW Arboretum, Madison. This program is a fun, fascinating way for families with children of elementary age and younger to explore the natural world. Adults must attend. Free, no registration required. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Thursday, February 22, 5:30 –7 pm, Virtual Lecture Series: The Art of Topiary with Mike Gibson, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Join award-winning artist Mike Gibson as he explores the therapeutic aspects of topiary and shares his process for beautifying locations of any type, creating more inviting spaces for our senses and decreasing negativity within an area. Fee: \$15/\$12 member. Register by February 20.

Tuesday, February 27, 5:30 –7 pm, Bringing the Tropics to the Midwest: A Look Inside the Thai Garden, Dan Schuknecht, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. A tropical effect can be achieved in Wisconsin using both tropical plants and Midwest natives. Join us to discuss how the Thai Garden gets this look and feel, plants that work well in various roles, techniques to use tropicals at home, and Wisconsin plants that fit the bill. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by February 20.

Thursday, February 29 – Sunday, March 10, times vary, Rooms of Blooms, Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh. Celebrate the art of floral design with the fresh aromas and kaleidoscopic colors of floral arrangements embellishing each room of the historic Paine mansion.

Thursday, February 29, 5–7 pm, Starting Seeds for a Beautiful Yard with Dan Unruh, Enthusiastic Gardener, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Learn how to start seeds and create a beautiful flower border for your yard in this hands-on class. We will focus on plants that attract pollinators, butterflies, hummingbirds, and spectacular moths. Each participant will take home three windowsill flats with a mix of annual and perennial seeds. This is a great class for beginner gardeners. Fee: \$65 / \$52 member. Register by February 22.

Saturday, March 2 – Sunday, March 24, 10 am–4 pm, Daily Spring Flower Show, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Breathe in the fresh smells of spring at Olbrich's annual Spring Flower Show featuring The Wonder of Seeds. Olbrich's Atrium is transformed into a flowering paradise celebrating everything seeds! Fee at door \$8 for adults (ages 13 & up), \$5 for children (ages 6-12), free for children (5 & under), free for Olbrich members.

Saturday, March 2, 4:30–6 pm, Behind the Scenes Orchid Walk with Irene Padlin, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Join Olbrich's conservatory and orchid horticulturist Irene Padlin for an inside look at Olbrich's orchid collection as she takes you on a lively tour of the Bolz Conservatory and Vera Lee Orchid House. Fee: \$28 / \$23 for members. Register by February 24.

Wednesday, March 6, 5:30 –7:30 pm, Gardener's Bootcamp, with Samara Eisner and Sam Malone, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Whether you have gardened for years or never picked up a trowel, this class will benefit you and your landscape. Your instructors will share years of horticulture experience with you as they touch on basic plant biology, demystify fertilizing, and share current gardening trends, and tips for purchasing plants. Fee: \$28 / \$23 member. Register by February 28.

Thursday, March 7, 6–8 pm, Recycling Garden Debris: Functional and Funky Ways to Conserve Organic Matter for a Healthier Garden with Erin Presley (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Recycling your own garden debris – fallen leaves, logs and branches, and overwintered perennial clippings – is foundational to nurturing a healthy garden ecosystem. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by February 29.

Saturday, Sunday, March 9 - 10, 9:30-11:30 am, and 1:30 pm each day, Youth and Scout Maple Sugarin' Days, Riveredge Nature Center, Saukville. Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4H groups, and youth organizations of all kinds are invited to a sweet adventure at Riveredge Nature Center! Engage in hands-on activities such as identifying maples, tapping trees, and experiencing the magic of sap turning to syrup. More [info](#).

Sunday, March 10, 1–3 pm, Hands-on Hydrangea Pruning with Dan Schuknecht, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Work side-by-side with Olbrich's horticulturist Dan Schuknecht to learn how to prune hydrangeas using Olbrich's collection. We will discuss and demonstrate general pruning principles applicable to woody plants, and then you will have the opportunity to hone your skills during this hands-on workshop. Fee: \$32 / \$26 member. Register by March 3.

Wednesday, March 13, 6–7:30 pm, Gardening is MY Therapy with Mike Maddox, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Maddox is a Horticultural Therapist. Enthusiastic gardeners exclaim "gardening is my therapy." Exactly why is that? This discussion explores the science and key gardening elements which can improve your wellbeing as told through the point of view of the presenter's COVID pandemic experiences. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by March 6.

Friday, March 15, 1–3 pm, Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers with Heather Prince (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Prince is from Fearless Gardening. Native woodland wildflowers are the first harbingers of spring. Learn specific identification characteristics, their fascinating natural history, and how they have evolved to rapidly grow, flower, and fruit. Fee: \$28 / \$23 member. Register by March 8.

Wednesday, March 27, 12–1:30 pm, Native (and Nativar) Woody Plants for Small Spaces with Lisa Johnson, (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Johnson is with the UW-Extension. Gardeners of any skill level will benefit from this instructional virtual lecture. You will learn what constitutes a native plant, and the situations when you may wish to choose a nativar. We will cover various natives and nativars, including their characteristics and the care you can expect them to require. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by March 20.

Wednesday, April 3, 5–7 pm, Introduction to Permaculture for Cold Climates with Tom Girolamo, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Girolamo is an author and permaculture designer. His vision is suitable for beginners to advanced and can be achieved by anyone on residential, business and farm properties in the upper Midwest. Fee: \$28 / \$23 member. Register by March 27.

Thursday, April 4, 7–8:30 pm, Gardening for Hummingbirds with Michael and Kathi Rock, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. The Rocks, representing the International Hummingbird Society, will teach you to create a sanctuary for hummingbirds in your own backyard. Their lecture will cover identification of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, ideal habitat, migration, nesting, feeding, importance of water features, and how the elements of the best hummingbird feeders and plants can bring you up close to these special birds. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by March 28.

Sunday, April 7, 2 –3:30 pm, Behind the Scenes Production Walk with Amanda Dix, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Have you ever wondered what it takes to produce and grow all of the new plants throughout Olbrich? Join plant producer extraordinaire and horticulturist Amanda Dix as she shares the ins and outs of plant production at Olbrich and gives you an inside look at our greenhouses during a peak production time. Fee: \$28 / \$23 member. Register by March 30.

(continued on page 6)

President's 2024 New Year Message

by Stephanie O'Neal, President

I just wanted to briefly wish all our members a Happy New Year and express our Board's collective thanks for your support, enthusiasm and continued interest in all things gardening.

As you can see from the list of events for the first half of the 2024 season, we have some great presenters coming up on our January-April programs, covering everything from a deep dive into ferns to a conversation about gardening as a form of art, to a closer look at both the new and the tried and true perennials and grasses recommended by nurseryman Brent Horvath.

We are continuing to improve each month our hybrid online/in-person programming that was necessary due to Covid and now is so important as we try to reach out to members both local and more distant. And though I know online attendance is easiest – just click the link and you're there – I'd like to put in a plug for being part of our in-person audience. It's such a pleasure to meet our members in person and make those connections that can lead to long and fruitful friendships, along with the extra attractions that are added to meetings, a chance to walk through Olbrich's Holiday Express in December, our September Book Exchange, our co-meeting with Madison Area Master Gardeners in March, a walk around Olbrich Gardens before our meetings, and more.

Other programming is also expanding. We have started up our workshop program again, with an already sold-out Workshop on *Pruner Cleanup and Sharpening* this month and at least two others in the works: *Staying Fit and Healthy in the Garden* in



June and *Seed Saving in August* (dates TBD). JoAnne Kriege has been working on final arrangements for our evening Garden Tours ("small east side gardens") in June and July with a focus on downtown Madison and the near eastside. And we mustn't forget the sold-out WHPS/Country Travel Discoveries tour of Arizona Gardens February 25-March 2 – we're very excited about this opportunity for WHPS members to travel together again (and high hopes for more trips in the future).

I especially want you to be on the lookout later this month for an email asking you to participate in our first member survey since 2015. It's not a long survey and requires very brief answers (unless you'd also like to add comments – which we welcome). If you are like me, you don't like to take surveys, but they are important for future planning and making sure that members get the most value for their membership, something that our Board always has uppermost in mind. So please take the time to complete the survey when you get the email – you'll be providing a positive influence on what we do in the future.

Don't forget to attend this year's PBS Wisconsin Garden and Landscape Expo in Madison at the Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall and stop by the WHPS booth (or sign up to volunteer for a shift at the booth) and attend our sponsored seminar at 1 pm on Saturday in Mendota 1-2).

My email box is always open to suggestions, comments and questions – sone2@aol.com – so don't hesitate to contact me.

Your membership helps to maintain the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society as an organization devoted to educational gardening experiences that can lift your interest and increase your confidence and joy throughout the gardening season.

Thank you!

Other Events (cont. from p.5)

Thursday, April 11, 5-6:30 pm, Ground Covers for Sun and Shade with Lisa Johnson, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Johnson, with the UW-Extension, will explain how ground covers can be used for erosion prevention, to create an understory in a landscape bed or woodland garden, and other purposes. Learn about some recommended herbaceous perennial and woody species that work well in various light conditions and soil types. Fee: \$18 / \$14 member. Register by April 4.

Friday, April 12, 1–3 pm, Rain Gardens 101 (Virtual), with Heather Prince, Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Prince is from Fearless Gardening. Discover the benefits to rain gardens! As more municipalities start encouraging residents to manage stormwater on their own properties, rain gardens are becoming an easy way to manage water and add a lively garden feature. We will walk through the basics of engineering the different types of rain gardens, and explore an extensive plant list. Fee: \$15 / \$12 member. Register by April 5.

Wednesday, April 17, 12–1:30 pm, Secrets of Gardens that WORK with Kasey Eaves, (Virtual), Olbrich Botanical Garden, Madison. Eaves, from Vivant Gardening Services, says "over the years, we've seen it all at our clients' homes. And we've discovered there are just a handful of important traits that help a garden truly thrive in a way that is both ecologically and psychologically sustainable. She will dive deep into the principles and practices that lead to flourishing, sustainable gardens. Fee: \$24 / \$18 member. Register by April 10.

Cyclamen purpurascens

by Gary Davis, WHPS Newsletter Committee

Most of us are familiar with *Cyclamen* as a house plant and may know that most species are found in warm, summer dry climates. But there is one species that can be grown in our region, and a number of local gardeners have had success with it. Below is the photo of a variety of *C. purpurascens* on August 9, 2023 in Gary Davis' garden in Madison. To learn more about this species click on the picture or [link](#).



Grants Update

By Kitty Rankin

Is your organization thinking of beautifying a public space in your community this year? The Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society will award up to \$1500 to a community group, school, or other organization for a project in the State of Wisconsin and adjacent states that promotes the use of hardy plants in the landscape.

Grants can only be awarded to a nonprofit organization or a group that is associated with a nonprofit organization. Funds may be used for educational purposes and plant material. Priority will be given to projects that are supported by WHPS members and to nonprofit organizations who have not received previous donations or grants from WHPS.

Grant requests can be submitted at any time and will be reviewed by the board members of the WHPS or a designated subcommittee. If the grant is awarded, a progress report is requested six months after the award funds are received. A verbal report of your project may be requested at the December annual business meeting of the WHPS.

To apply, complete the form on our website [here](#). If landscaping is involved, you will need to supply supporting documentation – an outline of the plan, site map, photographs, etc.

WHPS new members

The following members have recently joined WHPS: Ann Marie Fuerst, Portage, WI; Julie Hetzel and Lois Baseler, Madison, WI; Ralph James, Madison, WI; Lynn Latimer, Verona, WI; Dona Laufer, Montello, WI; Kathleen Roscoe, Manitowoc, WI.

Welcome!

In Remembrance



**Joan Frances Lawrence –
June 17, 1935-October 27, 2023**

Joan Lawrence was born in Palmerton, PA, and moved to Madison, the hometown of her husband Jimmy Lawrence, where she spent her working life as a respiratory therapist at Meriter Hospital. In her retirement, Joan expanded her interests in sewing, decorating and crafts, and developed a life passion for gardening, growing vegetables, herbs and expansive flower beds.

Joan will be remembered as a regular presence at WHPS programs, as a volunteer at the Plant Sale, and as a regular on local garden tours. Remembrance from friend and WHPS member Kyoko “Yoko” Maund: *Joan was a kind and caring person. She introduced me to the WHPS, and we did many activities together: The garden tours, the trips, and we always looked forward to going to the nursery to find new flowers and plants in Spring. At our Ikebana meetings, she had extra flowers to share with the others. She will be missed by many friends. Rest in Peace Joanie.* We offer our sincere condolences to her son Bart, her niece, Terry, and all of the friends who will miss her affection and generosity.

DUES REMINDER

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. Each WHPS member has received an email to let you know that you either need to renew your membership or you 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.

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.



**Gary Frances Whittenbaugh –
August 7, 1935 – November 17, 2023**

Gary Whittenbaugh passed away at the age of 88 in Oelwein, Iowa, where he and his brother Tom were raised and where they created their garden FranMara (a combination of their parents' names), in the late 1980s. Gary was the plantsman and Tom was in charge of the hardscape. Together they created a world-class garden that was visited by thousands of people and featured in magazines and television programs. Here is a [link to a video](#) from Iowa PBS which visited the garden in 2022.

WHPS visited FranMara and the Whittenbaughs on Iowa trips in 2009 and 2014, and Gary spoke at WHPS Meetings in 2010 (Gardening with Conifers) and 2018 (Small Conifers in the Garden).

In a November 21, 2023, Facebook post, WHPS member and Director of Reiman Gardens in Ames, IA, Ed Lyon said, “Gary was a friend and fellow gardener who promoted conifers with such enthusiasm. He will be missed, especially by those whom he inspired.”

Winter Interests

by Rebecca LaRose, WHPS Board

It's winter in Wisconsin and our gardens are quietly waiting for spring. I look forward to relaxing with enough time to read books, organize seeds, clean up my notes, and find new inspiration for the coming season. It's also my favorite time of year to slow down and learn. Since the pandemic, online meetings and webinars are readily available on a variety of topics and from many sources. They're accessible to more gardeners than ever. You can even go international without leaving home. If you join mailing lists from clubs, gardens, or speakers that you enjoy, you're sure to hear about more via word of mouth.

Botanical Gardens

Search your favorite gardens' websites for Education or Learning links. Most clearly list Virtual/Online classes in the titles to make it easy to find an option if you can't travel in person. Many offer discounts to members, so consider joining. Your membership supports the garden and can pay for itself quickly.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens (Madison, WI): I've taken many lectures and workshops from Olbrich over the years. The in-person classes also let me swing by the Conservatory for a dose of green plants and humidity when it's snowing outside. They offer a range of [topics](#) for adults and fun events for children.

Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe, IL): They offer a wide variety of [online and in-person](#) garden technique, design and art courses. They are also co-hosting the Perennial Plant Association Central Regional Symposium in February – both in-person or online.

Great Dixter (UK): Fergus Garrett is an inspiration. I first heard him speak at Olbrich and was thrilled when he started recording lectures during the pandemic. [Past recordings can be rented](#). Note: He also spoke this fall for the [Western Reserve Land Conservancy](#).

Universities

University of Wisconsin – Extension: This is the community education arm of the University. There is a vast wealth of information available on many Wisconsin-specific topics including invasive species, natural resources, agriculture, geology, natural history, wildlife, and water conservation. There are local offices in different counties, so you can find information specific to your part of the state. Check out the calendars at the bottom of each [Division's page for links](#) to upcoming programs.

Top Picks:

• **Horticulture Extension:** Home of the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program and a source for Wisconsin-focused gardening information. The Upcoming Programs and Resources links are full of information, including [past webinar recordings](#). Note: If you've ever completed Master Gardener training, you're also eligible to join the [Madison Area Master Gardeners Association \(MAMGA\)](#). They have a full calendar of learning opportunities, some in partnership with WHPS.

• **Entomology Extension:** If you're interested in insects, whether pests or beneficial, [this is the place to learn more](#). I'm a member of the WI Bumblebee Brigade, and they offer bumblebee specific education to help citizens report sightings. It's easy to watch for bumblebees at home and it's fascinating once you can identify them. I found five species in my own front yard in 2023! There's more information and a library of resources [here](#).

Ohio State University Bee Lab (Wooster, OH): This is an excellent source for pollinator education, with free [webinar recordings](#) going back several years. I've spent hours watching past lectures from national speakers like Doug Tallamy and Heather Holm and I recommend it often.

Special Interest Groups, Societies and Publications

There are specialized groups for almost everything, so I encourage you to search out your interests and see what's available. I have personal experience with the following and know they have virtual or local in-person options for interested gardeners.

Wild Ones: They promote native plants in landscaping and have free [recordings of past presentations](#) on YouTube – including Neil Diboll and Hillary Cox speaking about their recent book *The Gardeners Guide to Prairie Plants*. The Fox Valley chapter has an annual event in Oshkosh every winter.

Hardy Fern Foundation (Seattle, WA): This is a group for the serious fern enthusiast, and they offer [periodic webinars](#), plus helpful online resources. Richie Steffen is Vice President and we're thrilled to welcome him as our January 2024 speaker.

American Hosta Society: There are several [in-person events](#) in Wisconsin this winter.

American Conifer Society: They've expanded the [online offerings](#) for 2024. They're available to members only, but check it out if you're a "Conehead".

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: Xerces is an international science-based organization, and they promote knowledge and conservation for a wide range of invertebrate species. They've published several excellent books, and their webinars are beginner-friendly and free. Past recordings are available [on YouTube](#).

Western Reserve Land Conservancy (Moreland Hills, OH): They focus on conservation in Ohio, and have [educational presentations](#) and an annual symposium. Recordings can be found on YouTube.

Fine Gardening Magazine: In recent years, *Fine Gardening* has added [on-demand online courses](#). There are various topics, including *Flourishing in the Shade* by Ed Lyon – WHPS member and past speaker.

Wisconsin Garden and Landscape Expo: Feb 9-11, 2024. There are [seminars and demos](#) running all day, so the hard part is narrowing down the list enough to leave time to shop!

Whatever your garden interests, I hope you'll take some time to explore these and other online opportunities to enhance your knowledge and make this winter a valued fourth season of garden learning.

A Nasty Fight with Southern Blight

by Chris Neumann, former Landscape and Horticulture Manager for Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge, WHPS Board

In the early summer of 2016, I purchased shredded leaf mulch from a local garden center to use on two shade beds at home. In my capacity as Horticulturist at my place of employment, I purchased shredded leaf mulch from the same source for two shade beds there. The garden center had a landscaping division and produced the mulch from leaves collected the previous fall. As summer heated up, I noticed hosta leaves turning yellow and falling over both at home and at work in the areas we had spread the mulch. I assumed something was chewing on them at the base and if I ignored it, something else would come along and chomp on the chewers. Not long after, I received an email from the garden center which said, in part, that some customers were complaining that their leaf mulch contained a pathogen and that, while there were standards for compost, there were no standards for shredded leaf mulch, and so they would henceforth no longer sell it. I took a closer look at the problematic plants both at home and at work and discovered they were falling over due to fungus at the plant's crown. We had Southern Blight in the gardens.



Hosta leaves showing signs of southern blight at base of petioles.

Southern blight, *Sclerotium rolfsii*, is a lethal fungus. When I first tried to identify it, I searched under hosta fungus as that was what was being attacked. Hosta aficionados referred to it as hosta petiole blight or hosta crown rot. Despite these common names, *S. rolfsii* attacks over 500 plant species including fruits, vegetables, ornamental herbaceous plants, small trees, and shrubs. In the two garden beds where we have it, it has killed penstemon, geranium, goat's beard, hepatica, turtlehead, Korean fairy bell, many hosta, and others.

Southern blight attacks plants at the soil line or below ground. Often the first sign is a leaf or a stem that has fallen over. The base looks water soaked and ragged. White mycelia nets can be seen at the base of the plant. About a week after infection, the fungus produces sclerotia, (from which it gets its scientific name), that are rounded structures about the size and color of mustard seeds. The sclerotia are the characteristic that distinguishes it from other stem-attacking fungi.

This is a fungus much more common in the southern US as it requires heat and humidity. It does best with warm temperatures

(80-95°F), high relative humidity (>50%), and moist soils. The fungus rarely produces spores but spreads from plant to plant by the mycelium. The mycelium are not very cold hardy and freezing kills them. Unfortunately, the sclerotia can survive sub-zero temperatures allowing the fungus to survive from year to year. Sclerotia can last in soils for three or more years. Due to its environmental needs, Southern blight usually doesn't show up in Wisconsin until mid-summer. In my experience, it does best here in well-mulched shade beds. The mulch keeps the soil moist, the humidity high, and provides a hidden pathway for the mycelium to spread.

How do you save a plant with Southern Blight? Unfortunately, infections are fatal. The best way to contain the fungus is to remove the infected plant and all the soil within a foot or more of the plant to a depth of at least 3 inches. Start from the outside and work toward the center being careful not to drop any soil. The plant and soil should be put into heavy duty plastic bags and disposed of in the trash. Soil is heavy. If you have a large plant that is infected, you will probably need more than one bag. The soil from around our large goatsbeard, *Aruncus dioicus*, weighed well over 100 pounds. I divided it into three bags so I could lift them into the trash cart. All tools used must be washed carefully to keep from accidentally spreading soil with mycelium or sclerotia.

We have been playing whack-a-mole with this fungus for seven years now. At work, we managed to eliminate it in one year using the digging and removal method. At home, it keeps popping up even though we keep a close eye on these beds and remove infected plants immediately. Normally the fungus has been hitting one or two plants a season but this year we had five succumb. The bed looked quite odd with the holes and I had one person ask if we were going to plant a bunch of shrubs in it.

Like many people, for environmental and esthetic reasons, we have gone to a pretty laid back fall cleanup for most of our beds. Plants stay standing and tree leaves are left to lie where they fall. Spring cleanup consists of taking the cordless hedge shears and lopping all the plant stems down in six inch lengths. Along with the fall leaves they make their own mulch for the beds.

However, given that mulch helps the fungus spread, in our infected beds this last fall, I did a complete cleanup. I cut down all the plants in the bed, then raked the entire bed, removing all cut vegetation, fallen leaves, and all the current mulch. I bagged it, filling half a dozen large trash bags, and sent them to the dump. In early spring, I'll rake out and dispose of any additional leaves. The bed has been colonized by scilla, so I will be lopping them down and raking them up to prevent organic material from collecting on the bed surface. Hopefully, the remaining plants will survive this barren environment but the fungus will be limited in its ability to spread.

On a last note, I should mention the excellent UW-Extension report on Southern Blight by Ann Joy and Brian Hudelson, UW-Madison Plant Pathology. It is available online – search for southern blight and either of their names and it should pop up*. One option I have not mentioned that is found in their report

(continued on page 10)

Phlox paniculata 'Jeana' (cont. from p.1)

Topped with flowers, 'Jeana' can reach five feet tall and four feet wide, although size will vary geographically. Its bright green leaves are highly resistant to powdery mildew, so 'Jeana' has a striking summer look with or without flowers.

Tall garden phlox provide structure and color in summer gardens and are good bridging plants between early and later flowering perennials. 'Jeana' is at home in traditional borders and meadows and is a natural in pollinator gardens. Mix 'Jeana' with other tall perennials such as bluestars (*Amsonia*), Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum xsuperbum*), and switch grasses (*Panicum virgatum*). Or let its handsome foliage be the backdrop for shorter companions such as coneflowers (*Echinacea*), alliums (*Allium*), and woodland sages (*Salvia nemorosa*).

PLANT DATA

Hardiness: USDA Zones 3 to 8; Canadian Hardiness Zones 3 to 8; AHS Heat Zones 4 to 9

Light: Full sun; afternoon shade in hot climates

Size: 36-60 inches tall, 36-48 inches wide

Origin: 'Jeana' was discovered growing along the Harpeth River near Nashville, Tennessee, and was named for its discoverer, Jeana Prewitt.

Soil: Moist, fertile, well-drained soils. Avoid dry conditions.

Maintenance: Divide clumps every 3-5 years in spring. Deadheading promotes continued bloom and prevents self-seeding, which can produce inferior seedlings. Powdery mildew and spider mites may be foliar problems in hot or dry conditions. Thinning out stems to improve air circulation may guard against mildew. Deer and rabbits can be pests.



'Jeana' attracted more butterflies — Eastern Tiger Swallowtails were especially plentiful — than any other garden phlox in their study.

The place for perennial plant people!

Join the PPA Family online:
www.perennialplant.org/Join

Southern blight (cont. from p.9)

is that fungicide soil drenches can be used to treat infestations. They mention that not all have proven efficacy and that multiple treatments rotating different fungicides may be needed. I have not tried them because almost all of the ones Joy and Hudelson list are available only to professionals and the fact that fungicides in general are nasty stuff. All the ones listed for Southern Blight, including the one type that is available to consumers, had the following personal protection requirements for drenching: wear

long-sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes, socks, and gloves, all made of waterproof material. If you are spraying these, you need to add eye protection and a mask. If you spill a large amount in a confined space, self-contained breathing apparatus is required for clean-up. Also, do not use near water as they are toxic to aquatic life. Finally, they kill not only pathogenic fungus but beneficial fungus as well. All told, I prefer to put sweat equity into digging rather than to pay someone to apply these fungicides.



Close-up of base of hosta petioles. Sclerotia start out white and darken to orange as they mature.

A useful tip when using Google to search for garden information is to follow your search terms with "site:.edu" (without the quotes). So for our nasty fungus, you would enter the following:

southern blight site:*.edu

The "site:*.edu" tells Google to only look at sites that end in .edu. That will return answers from educational sites which include all university extension websites. Your results will be much more useful and accurate and save you from wading through the loads of misinformation a general search will bring up.

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

