



Perennial Notes

March 2001

The gardener is always painfully aware of the gap between the dream and reality. Like every artist, she knows that whatever is achieved is nevertheless a betrayal of that first radiant vision.

The Invisible Garden, Dorothy Sucher

COMING EVENTS!

March 21, 2001, 7:00 p.m., Olbrich Gardens—Margarete R. Harvey, Milwaukee Landscape Architect, will speak on *Gardening in Containers*. WHPS member Margarete is of German origin and keeps a house and garden in County Dorset, England, as well as Milwaukee.

April 18, 2001, 7:00 p.m., Olbrich Gardens—Richard Hawke, Curator of New Plant Evaluations at the Chicago Botanic Garden, will speak on the topic *Exciting New Plants for Midwestern Gardens*.

May 19, 2001, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.—Annual Plant Sale at the Pet Lodge in the Middleton Industrial Park.

June/July—Tours of Members Gardens
We plan to see gardens on the East side this year. Let Frank Greer, 233-4686, know if you are interested in showing your garden.

August 15, Wednesday, 6:00-8:00 p.m.—Potluck Supper at Olbrich Gardens.

September 15, Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.—Annual Fall Symposium at Olbrich Gardens—2001 Plant Odyssey.
Speakers include Dan Hinkley (Heronwood Nursery near Seattle, Washington); Barry Yinger (Asiatic Nursery, York, Pennsylvania); James Ault, Chicago Botanic Garden; and Bob Freckmann (botanist at UW Stevens Point). Join us on plant odyssey's to China, Japan, South Africa, SE United States and the Upper Midwest (Wisconsin). Admission charged.



WHPS TRIPS

April 19-22, 2001—Gardens and Nurseries of Nashville, Tennessee. We will visit the St. Louis Botanical Garden on the way to Nashville. This bus trip will include a visit to the National Quilt Museum in Paducah, Kentucky, where we will have a look at the use of flora in quilt design. In Nashville, we plan to visit Cheekwood (the city's botanical garden) in its spring glory, and, with the help of some friends in the Middle Tennessee Perennial Society, visit private gardens and several specialty nurseries in the Nashville metro area. We will also be attending the plant sale of the Middle Tennessee Perennial Society. Trip is sold out. Call Carrol Schiller for the waiting list at (608) 833-8522.

June 2, 2001—Day trip to Janesville Rotary Garden, Roy Klehm's Beaver Creek and Songsparrow Nurseries, North Wind Nursery in Lake Geneva, and WHPS member Barbara Behrend's garden in Burlington, WI. Barb will host a wine & cheese late afternoon reception for the group. Trip is sold out—for waiting list call Carrol Schiller at 833-8522.

August 10-12, 2001—Gardens and Nurseries of Michigan. Will include the Frederic Mejer garden in Grand Rapids, Michigan State University Gardens, Cranbrook Gardens (40 acres, Bloomfield, MI), Arrowhead Alpine and Gee Farm Nurseries, and Fernwood Botanic Garden. Cost is \$275 per person and includes bus transportation, two overnights, admission to gardens and meals. Contact Sandy Allen if you are interested; email DSAMR@chorus.net or phone (608) 836-9602.

June 14-22, 2002—Gardens of Northern England and Scotland. Preliminary itinerary has been completed and hotels are booked. Will include 3 nights in Edinburgh, 2 nights in SW Scotland, 3 nights in York, and one night near London. Tour will begin in Edinburgh on June 14 and end near Gatwick airport on June 22. Details will be available soon, including cost.

Pay those dues—please.

This is the final newsletter for those of you who have not paid your 2001 dues. Look on the label of this newsletter—if it does not have PD 2001 or beyond, you will not receive further communication. Stay with us, and send your check, payable to Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, to WHPS Treasurer Barb Herreid, 2788 Florann Drive, Fitchburg, WI 53711; (608) 271-9483. Dues are \$10.00 (individual), \$15.00 (family), \$25.00 (business).

WHPS NEEDS YOU! to volunteer

Your help is needed at our Annual Plant Sale!
See page 7 to find out how you can help.



Trip Updates and Reminders

Nashville Travelers...a Reminder —Thursday, April 19-Sunday, April 22

- 5:45 am Board at Comfort Inn, 1253 John Q. Hammons Dr.
- 6:00 am Depart Comfort Inn
- 6:20 am Depart Olbrich Gardens (park in northeast corner of lot)
- Since we have a full day planned, we will be unable to delay departure.
- Try to pack light...so the plants will have room on the trip home. Please put a luggage tag on your luggage with your name, address and Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society.
- If you plan to park at Comfort Inn and you have not provided your car license number, please call Carrol at this time.
- Bring along good jokes, experiences, tapes or games that you could share with your fellow travelers. You could win a prize!!!

See you Thursday, April 19.

June Junket to Southeast Wisconsin

April 15 is the deadline to submit payment for the June 2 trip to Rotary Gardens in Janesville, Song Sparrow Nursery, Northwinds Farm Nursery and Barbara Behrend's gardens. If you reserved a place and have not submitted payment and reservation form by April 15, we will assume you have other plans and the place will be available to another participant.

We have a wait list at this time, but if you have an interest in this trip, please call Carrol Schiller at 833-8522 and you will be added to the list.

Saturday, June 16...Historic Dane County Parks Tour

Unique opportunity to visit historic Dane County parks with Ken Le Pine, Director of Dane County Parks Department.

GREAT parks to be visited...Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Schumacher Farm, Indian Lake, Halfway Prairie, Walking Iron, Brigham and Donald.

Tour purpose...acquaint folks with these parks and raise funds for the Lussier Family Heritage Center. Lussier Family Heritage Center is a multi-use facility encouraging public activities which celebrate our interconnection with the land, ancestors and the community. The tour will begin and end at the Lussier Family Heritage Center at Lake Farm Park.

Lunch buffet will be at the Old Feed Mill in Mazomanie.

Tour cost...\$49.00.

If you wish to join the group on the chartered Badger motor coach, please contact Rhea Maier at Dane County Parks, (608) 242-4587, for complete details and a reservation form.

Other Events of Note

April 5, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Olbrich Gardens-Commons—WHPS member Nancy Nedveck of the Flower Factory will be speaking to the Hosta Society on *Plants for Your Garden*.

May 19—Planting day for the Midvale Heights Neighborhood Association. They will be planting 1200 perennials plus trees and shrubs in the median strip of Tokay Blvd between Midvale and Segoe Rds. If you can help call Jean Jelacic at 273-1682, or Nina Goldberger at 233-8841.

June 2, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. Memorial United Church of Christ, Lacy Rd, Fitchburg. *Hosta Society's annual plant sale.*

June 10, Sunday—Hosta Society is sponsoring a bus trip to the Dubuque Arboretum and Jim's Hosta Nursery. Mark Zillis will be a featured speaker at the arboretum. Call Diane Scharkey at (608) 835-5318 for details.

Getting Through the Longest Season! By A. Hort Hound

How does a plant nut blow off the Wisconsin winter blahs?

The mere 40 inches of snow in December was transformed into two feet of impenetrable, opalescent, molten glass by the repeated ice storms of January and February, playing havoc with garden conifers and boxwoods, which were crucified to the earth. This was to say nothing of the voles and other varmints romping through the network of tunnels under the great hardpack of whiteness, gnawing perfect rings through the cambium bark layer of every woody plant in their path.

One might have retreated to the cozy warmth of the house if it weren't for the ice dams creating indoor water features in brown pastels on the walls. Then there were the heating bills arriving monthly, which qualified the recipient for federal disaster relief.

Well, you begin with the two hundred paperwhite narcissus bulbs fortuitously acquired with your fall bulb order. Every two weeks, several more containers are stuffed with a half-dozen bulbs and placed under the grow lights. Within two weeks, new pots of the phosphorescent florets, throwing off their heady perfume, are placed in the kitchen, the dining room, the family room, and even the bathroom. Paperwhites, paperwhites everywhere!

Little brown bags of hyacinth bulbs (the best ones for forcing are from McClure and Zimmerman), kept in the back of the refrigerator, make their way gradually into a growing collection of forcing glasses on the windowsills. The white hyacinths are my favorites, for their spectacular display in the deep cobalt blue jars against the dark windows of the winter night. Their fragrance cannot compete with that of the paperwhites, however.

A conversation with my friend Scott Kunst at Old House Gardens reminds me of all the bulbs for forcing in

gravel and water listed in his fall catalogue that I didn't order. These include the narcissus varieties 'Erlicheer' (double white florets flecked with gold), 'Avalanche' (white petals with yellow cups from the Scilly Islands), and 'Constantinople' (a double paperwhite), as well as the wonderfully fragrant, melon-orange tulip 'Princess Irene.'

In fact, when the late winter edition of the "Smyth & Hawkem" catalogue arrives (doesn't it seem to come every few weeks?), I take advantage of a rare sale and order a set of cobalt glasses for forcing crocuses, thinking ahead to next winter. What a BLASPHEMOUS thought! And then there is that collection of dwarf amaryllis bulbs stockpiled in the fall which slowly come to life (6-8 weeks from start to bloom), throwing up their phallic stalks which eventually explode into magnificent cascades of white, pink, and even pale green trumpets. It was noted with joy that any number of the bulbs produced three separate flower stalks.

Then the orchids. Where would we be without Orchids by the Ackers during a Wisconsin winter in the Madison area? This hallowed site should be given national shrine status. For \$25-\$30 you can get months and months of spectacular blooms from these breathtaking beauties, and, of course, that requires a bonus of a trip to their greenhouses, awash with orchids in flower. (Never open on Sundays!)

My favorites are the easy to grow Phalenopsis, of course. A single plant produces flowers from December until May. I am always amazed how new sidescapes of flowers keep appearing from the original scape as the season progresses. White and yellow are my favorite colors, largely because on cold winter nights they look spectacular against the blackness of the picture window over the kitchen sink. I do not even mind loading the dishwasher while entranced by the study of their loveliness.

After the Christmas season, you can pitch the poinsettias and continue with pots of cyclamen, which will bloom for months if kept cool and continuously moist. I look forward to the arrival of the primroses and cinerarias (solid colors in pink and blue are to be preferred) in the garden shops by February, and enjoy their long blooming periods indoors again if the conditions are cool enough. There is little chance of that not happening if you are trying to stave off bankruptcy by keeping the thermostat down as low as you can stand it.

These days one should not be without cut flowers during the long winter months, thanks to the affordable bunches of flowers now carried in the local super markets. Be sure you know which days of the week they arrive from the wholesalers.

Nothing has the staying power (up to 3 weeks) of carnations or Alstromerias (Peruvian lilies, or lily of the Incas). I have been truly amazed by the color range of the latter—white, yellow, orange, lavender, red, pink, green, and almost any combination of these colors in a single flower. I enjoy displaying these in old Arts and Crafts vases which have been collected over the years. There is a big bouquet of Alstromerias on the bathroom counter top to begin every winter day.

Again after Christmas, you can forget about the wretched conditions outdoors by burying your nose in a mail-order catalogue. This year, I received a wonderful listing of Galanthus (snowdrops) available "in the green" from a nursery in New York state. The list of special cultivars goes on for pages, though most listings are limited to one bulb per customer. It is a bit pricey, as well.

I am amazed by the new cultivars of Martagon lilies available from Shady

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Oaks and the Lily Nook (Manitoba), which almost make up for the failed crop at Ambergate Gardens last year.

The best catalogue for good reading is again Dan Hinkley's from Heronswood Nursery. His essay on why he and his partner sold their nursery to W. Atlee Burpee is a masterpiece of garden writing. In another essay on hellebores, he compares this flower to a keg of Scotch whiskey or a rich Gouda cheese. And don't miss his essay on lawn mowing!!

I took note in the White Flower Farm catalogue that Tom Cooper has given up his editorship of *Horticulture Magazine* and is starting a new publication *The Gardener*, in cahoots with 'Amos Pettingill. Yes, I signed up as charter subscriber, with the first issue due to arrive in April.

Winter in Wisconsin is for reading about gardening and I have slowly whittled away at the tower of books and magazines by the side of the bed. Did everyone see the garden articles by Jamaica Kincaid in the *New Yorker* magazine this winter? She's back after a long absence. In the March issue she had a piece on how a gardener survives winters in Vermont.

I also enjoyed reading a newspaper account of a new medieval garden in Paris. It recently opened outside the Cluny Museum on the Boulevard St. Germain in the Latin Quarter. Throughout the garden flowers, plants, and shrubs are used that appear in the fabulous "millifleur" tapestries that adorn the museum's walls.

This reminds me of the display in the newly-restored glass house of the New York Botanical Gardens a few years ago, which duplicated the floral patterns in the Cloister Museum's unicorn tapestry series. At the Cluny, there is a sizeable kitchen garden and a medicinal herb corner. Medieval medicine did not separate treatment of the body from that of

the soul, and plants had spiritual virtues as well as physical ones. One 12th-century German nun wrote a book of recipes for moods, including a recipe for joy.

My favorite book from my late winter reading was **Notes from Madoo—Making a Garden in the Hamptons**. The author, Robert Dash, is the Christopher Lloyd of American gardening. His garden way out at the end of Long Island is a masterpiece, 30 years in the making. Preserved by his own private foundation, it is now open to the public. His book, actually a collection of columns he wrote for the *East Hampton Star*, makes for wonderful bedtime reading. His plant portrait essays are my favorite subjects, but his commentaries on the vagaries of weather forecasting, as well as sundry gardeners, are endearing.

The snow WILL melt someday. This is the promise of spring that is never broken. Adonis will arise again from his slumber and *Crocus* 'Bowles white,' with its delicate, orange-throated white trumpets, will awaken to kiss the blue sky of spring. Already, there are flocks of robins along the roadsides, and I have even heard the first red-wing black birds in the cattails along Wingra Drive in the Arboretum.

Yes, I have survived the winter blahs in Wisconsin. Well, all right, I will admit there was that restoration of the soul in Puerto Valharta in January, and there have been regular winter forays to Chi-town to take in the opera and symphony. And there was the new set of recordings of Mahler's ten symphonies to make you think about someone else's troubles.

Yet, do I really possess the stamina for the spring frenzy which is inexorably barreling down upon us? You bet I do!



From our Members...



WE REAP WHAT WE SOW

From Phyllis Sanner (author unknown)

PLANT THREE ROWS OF PEAS:

1. Peace of mind
2. Peace of heart
3. Peace of soul

PLANT FOUR ROWS OF SQUASH:

1. Squash gossip
2. Squash indifference
3. Squash grumbling
4. Squash selfishness

PLANT FOUR ROWS OF LETTUCE:

1. Lettuce be faithful
2. Lettuce be kind
3. Lettuce be patient
4. Lettuce really love one another

NO GARDEN WITHOUT TURNIPS:

1. Turnip for meetings
2. Turnip for service
3. Turnip to help one another

TO CONCLUDE OUR GARDEN WE MUST HAVE THYME :

1. Thyme for each other
2. Thyme for family
3. Thyme for friends

WATER FREELY WITH PATIENCE AND CULTIVATE WITH LOVE



For Sale/Swap...

From Phyllis Sanner—I would like to exchange or swap perennials for *Hosta* 'golden tiara.' Have lots to share. Can call me at (608) 882-5211, or e-mail at phyllis_sanner2000@yahoo.com



Here's a Tip...

From Molly McDermott—If there are black walnut trees in or near your garden, get a list of compatible plants from a garden center or extension office near you. I learned the costly way, planting and watching things quickly die due to the juglone toxin in the trees.



CREATE DIVERSITY – Gardening for Wildlife Habitat

By Tom Cottingham

The National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Habitat Program can help you make a place for wildlife in your own backyard. It does not take a large space or matter where you live. Habitat restoration in your garden is critical for wildlife, where residential development has either destroyed most natural areas or severely damaged them.



Creating a backyard habitat in my own backyard has been a never-ending source of beauty. It has enabled me to share many hours of tranquil

pleasure with family and friends. Using perennials with native wildflowers has given me an appreciation of the changing of the seasons. Here is a place where the plants provide cover and food and water attract wildlife only a few steps from my back door.

The NWF's *National Wildlife* magazine stirred my interest. I began to plan my garden for wildlife in 1972. Natural gardening also helped me to understand the reasons for planting diverse combinations of plants in my own backyard. My backyard has been certified since 1985. *National Wildlife* magazine has interesting articles and features on creative solutions, using native plants in the home garden, nature and current environmental subjects; I look forward to each issue for these reasons.

Following are some of my notes from past issues.

DISCOVERIES

Flowering Finds in Our Own Backyards (from an article by Laura Tangley)

You may be surprised to learn that more than 1,000 new United States species have been identified in the past quarter century—despite conventional thought, not all plants in the U.S. have been identified. According to Edward LaRue, a botanical consultant, most new plants are found in remote areas,

while others are found in heavily-populated areas. Recently, a botany student found Morefield's leather flower in a vacant lot in the middle of Huntsville, Alabama.

Ronald Hartman and B.E. Nelson, University of Wyoming botanists, shook up the botanical world in 1999 with their national-scale analysis. The report, *Taxonomic Novelties from North America North of Mexico* (published by the Missouri Botanical Garden Press), revealed that between 1975 and 1994, scientists described 1,197 new plants from North America—about 60 plants a year. The rate of discovery has remained constant for the past 40 years and shows no sign of slowing down. Ranging from lilies, orchids and violets to shrubs and cacti, nearly all the discoveries are angiosperms, complex seed plants that bear both flowers and fruit.

Sadly, many newly-discovered plants are more endangered than others, because they are both rare and endemic, which means they inhabit only one specific location on Earth. As Barbara Ertter, curator of western North American flora at the University of California-Berkeley, says, "At the dawn of the new millennium new plants species still are "lurking in our own backyards." In the United States, Ertter believes that about 5 percent of North American native plants north of Mexico still remain undiscovered.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Mother Nature May Hold the Keys To Cleaning up Toxic Messes (from an article by Joe Bower)

A new idea behind pollution cleanup is method called phytoremediation. Certain plants have genetic makeups that allow them to absorb and store, degrade or transform substances that kill or harm other plants and animals. Different plants work on different contaminants. The mulberry bush acts on industrial sludge; some

grasses attack petroleum wastes; sunflowers (together with soil additives) remove lead. The process is slow and takes several growing seasons to clean a site and is only effective to the depth of the plants reaching roots. Although some chemicals must be added to the soil to remove lead, for example, experts see a bright future for this technology, since using plants to soak up pollution require low energy and maintenance costs. Traditional cleanup costs can run as much as \$1 million per acre—this may be a promising solution to pollution problems as future technology develops. Another great reason to use diversity of plantings in our gardens...to heal the Earth!

SEASONAL PASSAGES

When Nature Goes Nuts (from an article by Les Line)



The cycle of seasons brings various crops of acorns. An astonishing array of animals are linked to and use a mighty oak's bounty. As Les Line says, a new rhyme might come to mind, "From tall oaks billions of acorns fall. And creatures wild will eat them all." In an oak forest, the acorn crop can reach 700 pounds per acre in a good year, and a mature tree with a spreading crown may yield up to 15,000 nuts.

Acorns are a significant food source for some 150 species of birds and 25 percent of mammals. *Quercus* is the Latin name for the genus oak, which means "beautiful tree." North American oaks are divided into two groups, white oaks, which have rounded lobes, and red oaks, with pointed, spine-tipped lobes. The most important difference between the acorns is this: the acorns of white oaks grow, mature in one season and are sweet to the taste; red oak acorns take two years to mature and are bitter with tannins and contain three

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times more fat. The extra fat in red oak acorns benefits squirrels and other animals, as the tannins are released later.

Behavior of animals

relates to these differences.

Since the white oak matures in one year, falling acorns are quickly eaten by small animals and birds and usually sprout in fall. The red oak lie dormant during the winter and will sprout the following spring. These factors relate to dispersal and regeneration of oaks.

The higher-energy source of red oak acorns enhances their value to wildlife, despite higher tannin contents. Chemical toxins show that tannins are strongest near the bottom tip of the red acorns, and even partially-eaten acorns will sprout along with the ones not eaten the following spring. This is why some of the caps of red oak are eaten in the fall. Big crops of acorns occur every three to four years. The oaks production of acorns varies from year to year, from heavy years with abundant food, to poor years when the seed predators starve.

The varying cycle in acorn numbers increases numbers of white-footed mice, which may produce several litters in a good summer after a peak acorn crop the previous fall. Gypsy moth caterpillars feed on oak leaves, but the inch-long pupa are "tender, tasty morsels" for the mouse hordes that will eat nearly all of them.

White-tailed deer eat little else but acorns when crops are abundant, and many of them become infested with adult ticks that are picked up while passing through brushy areas. Mating ticks fall from the deer into the leaf litter and lay eggs in the ground overrun with mice; these mice carry Lyme disease bacteria. The tiny pinhead-sized ticks will infect other mice or humans the following spring in the next cycle. The risk of getting Lyme disease is highest the second year after a big acorn crop.

"A decline in the abundance of oaks will alter the organization and fund of wildlife communities. Seeds of species that are replacing oaks, primarily red maple, sugar maple, sweet birch and yellow poplar, are of considerably less value to wildlife than acorns," says William Healy of the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station in Massachusetts.

The outlook for the future is not good. Current hardwood forests with oak are under stress from drought, and defoliation makes trees more susceptible to attacks by fungi and boring insects. Oaks may be threatened as a major forest tree component in the future because of weed invasions of red maple and other trees. Acorn to forest tree takes 40 to 50 years. Oaks can survive fires because of their deeper roots and thicker barks. Without the fires to control other invasive species there would be few areas for small acorn trees to grow and become replacements for the older oak trees.

In support of our native hardwood forests, I suggest others to plant oak trees their yards and gardens. What better place to observe nature than with your own beautiful oak tree that provides cover and food for wildlife.

Check your soil type before planting for an oak tree. I have silty, sandy soil. Avoid heavy clay soils, especially for white oaks, and remember, oaks become large trees. Like most other trees, oaks grow fast for the first twenty-five years. My red oak, planted in 1984, is 40'- to 45'-tall and has grown faster than I expected it to grow in that time. White oaks have spectacular autumn foliage coloration!



Contribute to the Newsletter!

If you have a tip, a garden item or some flora to swap, or would like to write an article for the newsletter, send your contribution to Stephanie O'Neal, 1850 Baird Street, Madison, WI 53713, or sone2@aol.com

Time to Volunteer!

The Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society **Annual Plant Sale** will be held this year on Saturday, May 19, from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Pet Lodge in the Middleton Industrial Park.

Volunteers are needed in preparation for the sale and help will be needed the day of the sale too.

Doing a Dig

Each year three or four members volunteer to host a dig at their garden. WHPS supplies the soil and pots, the host digs up the plants he or she wants to contribute, and volunteers help to pot up the plants that will be left at the site for later transportation to the sale.

That's all there is to it. Did we mention the fun of visiting a member's garden and getting warmed up for the season?

The Day Before the Sale

The day before the sale, volunteers are needed to help transport the plants to the Pet Lodge. This process would begin about 2:00 p.m. on May 18. Volunteers are also needed to help arrange the plants for sale and mark the plants with names and prices. We usually try to finish by 6:00 p.m.

Your own garden contributions are welcome, bring them by between 3:30-6:00 p.m. 5/18.

Sale Day!

Volunteers are needed from 8:00 a.m. on to get final setup ready and to act as roaming helpers, loaders, cashiers, and for cleanup at the end of the day at 1:00 p.m.

Volunteer Now!

If you would like to host a dig, help at a dig, work the day before or the day of the sale, call Stephanie O'Neal at 256-6108, or e-mail Stephanie at sone2@aol.com

Musings of A. Hort Hound—Ups and Downs

This past year had its triumphs and failures when it came to plants.

The seeds brought back from the Munich Botanical Garden—*Nicotiana niobe*—germinated readily and were transplanted outdoors in early June. These things grew AND GREW, ultimately reaching a height of twelve feet by early October. Unfortunately, all of the pink flowers occurred on the very tops of the plants, and none of the lateral branches produced flowers before frost.

Mrs. A. Hort Hound could not abide these horticultural marvels and repeatedly threatened to hire an assassin. After all, as she ably put it, what good are plants that can only be appreciated with helicopter tours!! The neighborhood kids referred to them as Jack-in-the-Bean Stalk Plants, and, I will admit, they did change the character of the block. They were definitely a conversation piece, one of those rare plants that generates spontaneous comments from even nongardeners strolling by. They were quite woody, and the two-inch in diameter stalks had to be cut with a bow saw. The roots resembled those of small trees.

A few days after they were cut down, a couple of notes appeared in the mailbox. One simply stated "What a relief," and a second questioned whether or not I had observed the giant tumbling into the garden. Though they were not bothered by a black aphids like *N. sylvestris*. I must confess even my gardening "friends," to whom I had given seeds or seedlings, had few nice things to say about the plant. I remain totally in the dark as to the plant's origins, and even the plant data base on the website of the Missouri Botanic Garden turned up a blank when I searched for it.

Another failure was the annual *Cerintho major* 'Purpurescens.' I had fallen in love with this plant when first seen as an underplanting

for the rose garden at Sissinghurst, and again this summer in Nori and Sandra Pope's garden at Hadspen House, where they were placed in brilliant bluish-purple ceramic pots that highlighted the iridescent purplish leaves surrounding the small bluish-black flowers.

Shari Voss had given me the seeds last winter at a WHPS meeting, and I duly planted them under the grow lights in late March. Every single one sprouted, with large cotyledons like those beans you planted in your third grade class room. Unfortunately, when placed in the garden, the individual branches became long and spindly, absolutely unsightly by the end of July, with only the very tips of 24" branches having any unblemished foliage. Of course, after the plants succumbed in late August (with a helping hand, I might add) the self-sown seeds sprouted almost immediately.

Another plant that bade farewell to the garden, was a seven-year-old plant of *Stewartia pseudocamellia*. Though it had produced a dozen flowers in the past few years (each flower only lasts one day) the plant continued to look ghastly as it suffered from leaf drop and chlorosis. The uprooting was slightly painful, but I got over it.

As for success stories, *Acer sieboldianum* 'Sode no unchi' has given me nothing but pleasure this growing season. It took the place of that 10-year-old *Hamamelis virginiana* on the corner of the house, which had the annoying habit of retaining all of its dead brown leaves all winter long, unless I painstakingly removed each and everyone by hand. A neighbor willingly took the contribution, and Peter Morsch at Stonewall Nursery came up with this replacement woody.

This is one of the few dwarf selections of *A. sieboldianum* and is used

for rockeries and bonsai in Japan. It has very tiny leaves (2-3 cm) and by the end of October they turned to rich tones of crimson and orange, in the shade no less!! It is reportedly difficult to propagate (this one is a graft) which probably accounts for its high price. If it does not prove winter hardy, there will be much wailing and gnashing of teeth!

A far simpler plant was a seedling of a *Datura* that someone passed on to me at a WHPS meeting last spring. I had never really grown moonflower before, and wasn't sure that it would even bloom this summer. I guess I shouldn't have been in doubt, as Whitey Holmes later told me that another member of this genus is the most significant agricultural weed in the world!

It was sited in the collection of pots along the driveway, and gradually rose to a height of 30 inches. One August evening, I took notice of three large buds as I left for the hospital. Returning home about midnight, after the tragic death of a newborn from a prominent Madison family, I was stunned to see the flowers had fully opened during my brief but trying absence, and oh, the fragrance!! The three simple white flowers blooming at the midnight hour were certainly uplifting for the spirit.

In the same family, I must say that I was also taken with the very large Brugmansias of many different colors in front of the Imperial Garden Restaurant in Middleton this summer.

Perhaps the most satisfying "gardening" experience of the summer resulted from observing my neighbor using a power washer to clean his sailboat. Impressed with the results, I asked him if he thought it would take the ten-year build up of algae and sooty black mold off the garden's lanin stone terraces and pathways. He lent it to me for a day,

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Musings...continued from previous page

and I went to town like a kid with a new toy. The results were beyond belief!! The rocks almost looked like they did when they were incorporated into the garden in 1990. I am proud to say I now have my own power washer. Don't buy the low end models sold by Home Depot. I found a good supplier in Milwaukee of a commercial grade machine made in Iowa. The right tool for the right job, my Dad always said! I can remember many an agonizing hand scrub job in the past, and even Mrs. A. Hort loves to wield the water torch!! (Great for blitzing the front porch steps!)

One of the low points of the summer was the plant order from Glasshouse Works in Stewart, Ohio. This supplier specializes in unusual annuals and tender plants, and I placed my order in March for plants to use in my container plantings for the summer. Well, they never came until, of course, the day after I left for a two-week vacation in mid July. As the box was not marked "live plants, open immediately," my neighbor just shoved it into the garage where I didn't notice it myself until several days after my return. Needless to say, the plants were in a disastrous state.

Amazingly, I only lost a couple of the two-dozen holocaust survivors, but it was a long, slow recovery. Hopefully, I will be able to maintain the best of the new coleus and impatiens over the winter to use as next year's container plants.

Two great new coleus survived—"Super Duck Foot" (giant duck foot leaves) and 'Charlie McCord,' with small, tightly bunched leaves.

I have subsequently surmised that Glasshouse Works propagates your plants only after you order them, so take heed and order them long before you might ever need them.

From, "A Sense of Place," Jo Munro, *Hortus*, Spring 2000

☀ Photography, painting, writing—these are some of the things that, I have discovered, give me fresh insights into nature. Other people will find their own ways. I sometimes wonder about the abilities lying dormant in all of us. I don't mean major ones deserving of public admiration, but more modest blessings, gifts small yet precious. How many people possess such talents buried under the demands and responsibilities of life, hidden away, like flowers that will never open; gifts that should give them joy, but are destined to be carried to the grave unrealized? I like to think that just as these talents can be crushed by an unkind word in one's childhood, they can equally well be given a nudge of encouragement in maturing, and blossoms in old age.

☀ Of course I may talk about efficiency, and easy-care gardens, but I know very well that I will always garden to the limit of my energy. Aches, pains, and tiredness will be forgotten in the joy of plants, and the excitement of some new project.

☀ Other gardeners tell me that they move things; they seem half-embarrassed, as if confessing some hidden vice. Well, I think that's what it's all about—movement, growth and change, balancing the size of the plot, the size and shape of the areas within it, and the colour, texture and visual weight of plants. Beauty in a garden is nothing to do with size, it's to do with balance. But this beauty, so hard won, is not static. No sooner have we got it right than it shifts, and adjustments have to be made.

☀ But what does it all boil down to in the long run, all this digging and planting and weeding, all those wheelbarrows of mulch and rocks, all the sweat and tears? The non-gardener must be completely mystified. I suppose the answer is different for each gardener, but for me the reward is in the pure joy of those brief moments of divine beauty when time stands still, and I almost catch the essence of life.



See you at the next meeting!

Don't forget to join us at the next WHPS meeting on Wednesday, March 21 at Olbrich Gardens for Margarete R. Harvey's presentation on *Gardening in Containers!*

Thank you!

To all of the volunteers who helped with the WHPS display at this year's Garden Expo, a BIG THANK YOU!

- Jeff & Lisa Bartig
- Jean Bawden
- Stephanie Bloomquist
- Linda Brazill
- John Cannon & John Fritsch
- Linda Dauck
- Alton & Lila Erickson
- Ed Hasselkus
- Nancy Hogan
- Jane La Flash
- Barbara Obst
- Roberta Rush
- Diane Scharkey
- Phyllis Sanner
- Bernie & Jim Treichel

Special thanks to Joan Severa and her publisher for allowing us to sell her book, **Creating a Perennial Garden in the Midwest**, at our booth. And thanks to Tom Cottington for loaning us some wonderful pictures of his garden, past and present, to spur the imagination of those who stopped at the booth.

Answer to "Perennially Puzzling (page 11)



Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society



March 2001 Newsletter
 925 Waban Hill
 Madison, WI 53711

- President—Frank Greer
- Vice President—Diane Scharkey
- Recording Secretary—Stephanie Bloomquist
- Treasurer—Barb Herreid
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 - Ed Hasselkus and Carrol Schiller
- Chair, Ways and Means Committee—Open
- Communications—Dick Eddy
- Publications—Stephanie O'Neal

Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society

Membership Renewal

How do you know if your dues are paid?

Check the label on the newsletter. If it says PD2000, you are paid through 2000.

Dues payments are made for January through December and are due for 2001 by no later than March 1, 2001.

Please submit this information page along with your dues check.

NAME _____

ADDRESS () change in address?

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Type of Membership (You can pay dues for up to three years at a time)

() INDIVIDUAL.....\$10.00-1 year () \$20.00-2 years () \$30.00-3 years

() FAMILY.....\$15.00-1 year () \$30.00-2 years () \$45.00-3 years

() BUSINESS.....\$25.00 (includes 1 free ad in newsletter)

() I have included a few extra dollars for further support to the society's programs.

I am interested in helping out with the following activities:

() Programs

() Plant Sale

() Mailings

() Community Projects

() WHA-TV Gardening Expo

() Publications

() Tours

() Hospitality

Other local plant societies I belong to:

Expertise I have that may be useful to the Society: computer, journalism, publishing, public relations, horticulture, landscape profession, etc.:

Please mail completed form and check made out to The Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society (WHPS) to:

Barb Herreid, 2788 Florann Drive, Fitchburg, WI 53711; 271-9483