



Perennial Notes

April 2002

And the glory of the garden it shall never pass away!

Rudyard Kipling, *The Glory of the Garden*

COMING EVENTS!

Wednesday, April 17, 2002, 7:00 p.m. Olbrich Gardens. **Bob Freckman, Department of Horticulture, UW Stevens Point—Rare Wisconsin Plants—Personal Encounters and Challenges for Cultivation.** Bob has traversed the state to photograph these plants and unfortunately some are thought to be impossible to cultivate in the garden.

Thursday, April 25, 6:00 p.m. til dark, joint **Spring Garden Tour** with the Madison Area Master Gardener Assn. Gardens on tour include the Nakoma gardens of Frank Greer (925 Waban Hill), Chris Bylsma (734 Miami Pass) and Ed Hasselkus (746 Miami Pass). All three gardens are just 3-4 blocks off the intersection of Nakoma Road, Seminole and Yuma Drive, with Frank's garden just a few blocks up off Yuma. The Miami Pass gardens can be reached by turning right on Cherokee off Yuma and then look for the left onto Miami Pass.

Saturday, May 18, 2002 9:00-Noon, *WHPS Plant Sale*, at the Pet Lodge, 2332 Pinehurst Drive, Middleton (off Highway 14 on right past United Building Center). Members are welcome to bring plants in pots, flats or bags to the sale location the Friday before the sale, May 17, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. Try to have the plants labeled or marked when you bring them, or ask a volunteer to help you mark them when you arrive.

June 14-23, 2002, *WHPS Biannual trip to the British Isles.* Trip oversubscribed. Waiting list only.

August 2-4, 2002 (Friday-Sunday) *WHPS Trip to Minneapolis.* Trip coordinator Sandy Allen—608-836-9602; dsamr@chorus.net. Filling up fast! Leave Madison 8/2 at 6 a.m. to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Stops include, Como Park (a Japanese garden and conservatory, Bachman's Garden Center (the largest in Minnesota), Rice Creek Garden Nursery (display gardens and sells rare and unusual perennials, dwarf conifers, water plants, hostas, alpiners), a personal tour of the Minnesota Arboretum by Ed Hasselkus, Kelly and Kelly Nursery, and a few more private garden tours before returning to Madison Sunday, 8/4 at 7:00 p.m. Cost is \$275.00, including stay at Quality Inn Downtown in Minneapolis and dinners.

August 21, 2002, 7:00 p.m. Olbrich Gardens. WHPS Annual Potluck Supper.

Other Events of Note

May 5 Badger State Dahlia Society Sale, 2-7 p.m. Olbrich Gardens, (608) 233-2394.

May 9-11 Olbrich Gardens Plant Sale, 2-7 p.m. May 9, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. May 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. May 11, (608) 246-4550.

May 10-11, West Side Garden Club Plant Sale, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., 3918 Nakoma Road (near Seminole Highway), (608) 238-3990.

May 11, Friends of Arboretum Plant Sale, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., tent near Visitors Center, (608) 263-7760.

May 10-12, Janesville Rotary Gardens Unusual Annuals Plant Sale, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., (608) 752-3885.

June 8-9 The American Peony Society will hold its annual **Convention** in Madison at Olbrich Gardens. There will be flower displays, garden visits (?), a dinner and a plant auction. For more details check out the society's website: www.americanpeonysociety.org

June 29, McFarland Friends of the Library Tour of 10 Gardens, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., cost \$10.00, rain or shine.

August 3, Madison Area Iris Society Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Olbrich Gardens, (608) 839-5449.

August 10-11, Wisconsin Daylily Society Sale, 8/10 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 8/11 noon-4 p.m. Olbrich Gardens, (608) 221-1933.

September 19, Olbrich Gardens Fall Lecture Series—*Perennials for the Garden—Design begins with the Right Plants,* guest speaker Allan Armitage. \$10 Olbrich members, \$12 general public.

Heronswood Nursery is Safe

An article in the New York Times on Sunday March 31, focused on the recent troubles of the Burpee Seed Company in its 125th anniversary year. After a period of uncontrolled growth in which the business expanded into lawn furniture and retail outlets, the company landed in bankruptcy court in the fall of 2001. Part of this rapid expansion included the purchase of Heronswood Nursery from Dan Hinkley and Robert Jones.

The article also noted that the sale of seeds has fallen dramatically in the last 25 years as yuppie style gardeners now prefer buying ready-to-plant packs of impatiens and tomatoes. At the same time, the size of the average vegetable garden has fallen from 800 to 100 square feet.

Despite this bad news, Burpee has decided to retain Heronswood Nursery, a premier mail order plant company. This should make all WHPS members very happy.

Did anyone else receive their mail order plants from Heronswood in the middle of March this year? Though many of the plants were still dormant, those that were in the period of rapid growth presented a dilemma for Wisconsin gardeners.

Improvements to Bike Path on Midvale

A generous donation from the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society will help the Midvale Heights Neighborhood Association put some of the finishing touches on our Gateway Project. The Gateway is the area where the new Northwest Bike/Ped Path crosses Midvale Boulevard. Although we have received a grant for the hardscape, we lacked funding for the crowning glory – plants! That’s where WHPS came to the rescue.

Residents of the Midvale Heights neighborhood have been working with local resident artist Bill Grover to bring history to life at our Gateway site. After some research, our designers focused on these themes: Midvale Heights lies atop glacial till left here 12,000 years ago; the till is underlain by 500 million year old Cambrian sandstone and limestone; we live at the northeast edge of the North American bison range and the edge of what was the tall grass prairie.

Developed from these themes, “A Ring of Prairie Time” will be a circle of limestone seating open to the south, which will also form an interactive sundial. Artist Bill Grover will work with local children and adults to form a life-sized reclining adult bison and calf out of reinforced concrete. Other features of the site will include a boulder of red granite, our Wisconsin State Rock, and a “Midvale Heights Neighborhood” sign, cantilevered from a base of glacial boulders.

We plan to make the foreground of the site a short grass prairie, while the background will be more formal with trees, shrubs and a variety of perennials. Our tentative plans for trees include a burr oak, a ginkgo, a redbud, a Korean maple, a silver bell and some flowering crabs. Shrubs will include ninebark, fothergilla, dogwood, witch hazel and viburnum. We’re still refining our list of perennials. Since we’ll be hauling in the materials for the sundial and bison during the summer, we’ll hold off on planting the foreground until fall. However, we will be putting in the trees and shrubs this spring.

Many thanks to the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society from the Midvale Heights Neighborhood Association. We hope those of you who live or drive through the area will enjoy watching the transformation this summer.

Submitted by Peg Luby and Jill Hynum
with thanks to Jean Sweet and Bill Grover

New USDA rules regarding plants and seeds

There is a new move afoot to require phytosanitary certificates for interstate plant and seed shipments. All seed shipments from other countries will be banned unless the seed is on a "clean list." (It isn't banning any seed that has been proven to be invasive; it's banning any seed NOT on the list. I am particularly concerned about this because I like rock garden plants so well, and so many of those little "bun" plants come from people in other countries.)

This move on the part of the USDA will effectively kill most nursery shipments of plants in the United States, or make them so expensive that customers will cease to order from some of the interesting specialty nurseries. For those of us who order seeds from the seed exchanges, those exchanges will cease to exist. For those of us who order daylilies or other plants from out of state, many of the nurseries will cease to exist.

The discussion period for this new procedure is almost over, so it's imperative that you do something immediately if you feel strongly about this.

Check the latest information on the J.L. Hudson Seeds Website: www.jlhudsonseeds.net/

Submitted by Jean Bawden

Spring at Rotary Gardens

What do Bing Crosby, Mickey Mouse, Shakespeare, Ted Turner and the Mona Lisa have in common? They are all at Rotary Gardens this May! These are just some of the tulip varieties in Janesville Rotary Gardens **Tulip Time!** celebration. There will be over 500 varieties of tulips in bloom, including over 35 different species tulips. See Barcelona, Cape Cod, Greenland, Monte Carlo and Formosa--all in the same day!

In addition to the new tulip display, there will be over 250,000 other bulbs blooming in the gardens from late March through early June, and thousands of pansies throughout the gardens.

Other highlights for the Rotary gardens in 2002 include a clematis collection (over 80 varieties), a Roman Ruins garden with Mediterranean natives and plants used during Roman times, a Heritage Garden with native Wisconsin plants and pioneer vegetables, and more unusual annuals, tropicals and award-winning roses.

Rotary Gardens will hold its third annual HerbFest Spring Plant Sale on May 11 and 12 from 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There will be over 200 varieties of herbs and 150 varieties of unusual annuals for purchase. Bagged mushroom compost will also be available, along with vendors, seminars and kids activities.

Submitted by Mark Dwyer

A Primula for Every Border



This year is officially the year of the rose (genus *Rosa*), but for me it will, as usual, be the year of the primrose (genus *Primula*). I've

nothing against roses; they just don't do well in my yard, which has full sun nowhere. Primroses, however, appreciate a bit of shade and I can provide as much or as little as they desire.

Primroses are sweet, endearing little flowers. They bloom primarily in spring, hence the name, derived from the Latin *primus*, meaning first. They are not prim in the sense of prim and proper, being informal, friendly and exuberant in flower. It is always proper to include them in the garden. I consider them essential.

There are about 425 species of primrose. Most are native to a variety of habitats in the moister, cooler areas of the Northern Hemisphere. Given the range of habitats they have adapted to, it only makes sense that some will survive and thrive in our Wisconsin gardens, although most need a wee bit of help. As long as one satisfies the absolute requirement—that their root zone is cool and moist while growing—it is possible to find a primula for any partly sunny to very shady area of the garden. They dislike extremes of temperature, and therefore benefit from a mulch in winter and a carefully chosen location to provide protection from our hot midsummer afternoon sun. They also generally like a humus-rich soil.

Easiest of all the Primulas is *P. sieboldii*. Although it is native to wet meadows in Japan, it grows beautifully here. One Web site even describes it as the only "foolproof" primrose, growing in any soil and exposure. It has the good sense to go dormant in August when most primroses are struggling with the heat and not looking their best.

P. sieboldii comes in a variety of colors—white, shades of pink, lavender, even two-toned with the petals white on one side and pink on the other. Like snowflakes, the petal shapes are all different. They grow easily from seed, demanding no special care to get through the heat of summer. They bloom in their second year, rewarding the gardener with the joy of discovering a unique flower as each plant comes into bloom.

The 425 species of primrose have been divided by botanists into 37 sections and many subsections. *P. sieboldii* is, for example, in Section *Cortusoides* and subsection *Cortusoides*. The value of these classifications to the gardener is that species in the same section usually have similar cultural needs. In this same section and subsection is *P. polyneura*, a species I started from seed, planted out and forgot about until its third year, when it bloomed. It was the star of the garden. Growing in deepish shade, its flowers were a dark pink and very long lasting. The same section but in subsection *Geranioides* is *P. kisoana*, which also does well here in a woody garden. It has big, fuzzy leaves, white or pink flowers, and is easily propagated, as it is rhizomatous (unusual for a primrose).

Most garden writers put the Primulas in broader groups determined by common cultural needs. The above mentioned primulas are woodland primulas (from Asia), growing in similar conditions to the European woodland (edge of woods) primulas. It is this latter group with its 'gold-laced' variety and a 'true blue,' both grown from Thomson Morgan seed, that led me down the primrose path of enchantment with these plants.

A more demanding group of Primula is that referred to as for the bog or waterside, frequently called 'candelabra' because of the multiple-tiered flower spikes. Of these, *P. japonica* is most easily grown here. Although short-lived, it self-sows readily, so one need never be without them.

Others in this group, *P. bulleyana* and *P. beesiana*, although perennial in their native lands, are only biennial for us. Apparently, one Midwestern summer is their limit. Fortunately, they too will self-sow. Mine died after setting seed, despite my valiant attempts to keep them happy. The following spring seedlings were everywhere—including The PATH! I hadn't the heart to weed them out. This worked out for the best, as the ones that germinated in the lovingly-constructed-specially-for-primroses raised bed, home of the parent plants, all died, and the ones in the PATH flourished. If they come through the winter, I'll have a real primrose path. Attempting to grow this group is, for me true "habitat denial," as my garden is at the top of a dry, thin-soiled hill with much of the shade provided by large trees (elms), well known for their ability to take all available moisture. These primulas need constantly moist soil, good drainage, a fair amount of light (no deep shade) and are very unforgiving if their root zone becomes hot or dry.

For more specifics on Primula culture *Rock Gardening*, by H. Lincoln Foster and *Primroses & Spring*, by Doretta Klaber, offer an excellent introduction. Both are by American gardeners and contain useful insights into growing primroses in the U.S.A. My favorite reference book is *Primula*, by John Richards. It contains detailed cultural information from a British perspective and fascinating descriptions of Primulas in their native lands. You can read about leaf mould pastures high in the Himalayas or *P. florindae*, tall as a person when in flower. All three books are in the Olbrich Library.

—Ruth Cadoret

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● You can purchase some of
● Ruth's primulas at the
● WHPS Plant Sale May 18!
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Native Orchids

Want to try something a little different? Grow orchids in your garden. They can be more temperamental than some plants, but they're worth the effort. The most important thing to remember is **DON'T DIG PLANTS FROM THE WILD**. The Native Orchid Conservation Committee of the Northeastern Wisconsin Orchid Society (NEWOS) has put together a source list of vendors who sell laboratory-grown native orchids (see below). Native orchids are usually expensive because they can be temperamental and may require several years of care before they're blooming size.

There are a number of interesting native orchids you can try. The yellow lady slippers (*Cypripedium calceolus*) are fairly easy to grow. They're not as hardy as some others and can benefit from a winter mulch. The Flower Factory used to sell them, but they haven't for several years now. Expect to pay about \$18 for a plant.

The showy lady slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*) are hardier than the yellows, but may require some special planting media. At least three of the growers listed below (Cyp Haven, Vermont Lady Slippers and Bluestem Farms) recommend mixtures containing bark, peat moss, sand and other material. Expect to pay about \$35 for a blooming size showy lady slipper. However, if you're willing to wait a few years for blooms, Scott Weber of Bluestem Farms sometimes sells seedlings at the Farmer's Market at a lower cost.

Cyp Haven also sells lady slippers, including some hybrids. Carson Whitlow, the owner of Cyp Haven, has been working for many years to develop *Cypripedium* hybrids that are easier to grow in a garden. Most cost about \$20 to \$35. The Vermont Ladyslipper Company specializes in a lady slipper called *Cypripedium acaule*, (the pink lady slipper) which is considered a difficult plant to grow. They sell for about \$35, but are not recommended for beginners.

Spiranthes (the Ladies Tresses orchid) is easier to grow than the slippers. It has small, white, fragrant flowers that bloom in September. It's also more affordable than the lady slippers. It's usually available from the Flower Factory for about \$6.

Several nurseries sell *Bletillas*, which come in lavender and white. They're easily grown but not as hardy. You should give them a winter mulch or else dig up the bulbs and store them in your refrigerator. They cost about \$6.

The rattlesnake orchid (*Goodyera*) is usually grown for its foliage, which is dark green with light-colored veins. It doesn't like competition and doesn't stand up well to squirrels. It's usually available from the Flower Factory for about \$5.

Go to the Website of the Northeastern Wisconsin Orchid Society (NEWOS) to learn more.

Northeastern Wisconsin Orchid Society: www.familyshoebox.com/family/NEWOS, or Kip Knudson, Native Orchid Committee E-Mail: knudy@cybrzn.com.

Submitted by Jill Hynum,
Orchid Growers' Guild

List of vendors who sell laboratory-grown native orchids

Arrowhead Alpines
PO Box 857
Fowlerville, MI 48836
(517)223-3581, (517)223-8750 FAX Catalog \$2.00

(*Cypripedium acaule* & *alveolus*
Goodyera pubescens, *Habenaria*)

Bluestem Farm, Scott Weber, 5920 Lehman Rd.
Baraboo, WI 53913 (608) 356-0179
E-Mail: bluestem-farm@juno.com

Cyp Haven, Carson Whitlow
2291 280th St., Adel, IA 50003-8233
www.orchidmall.com/cyp.haven/
(515)993-4841
SlipperGuy@aol.com (*adult Cyps*,
calopogons, *arethusa*)

Great Plants PO Box 1041
New Hartford, CN 06057
(800)441-9788 (860)379-8488 FAX
www.greatplants.com
(*rescued Cypripedium*, *Pleione*)

Green Canyon Orchids, Peter Croezen
576 Greenbrook Drive
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2M 4K6
(519)578-1617
E-Mail: orchids@golden.net <http://home.golden.net/~orchids>
(*seed grown Cypripedium reginae*)

Vermont Ladyslipper Company
Elizabeth & Scott Durkee
56 Leduc Road
New Haven, VT 05472-1000

E-Mail: VTLSCOTogether.net
www.vladyslipper.com
(*lab-propagated Cypripedium reginae*,
acaule, *pubescens*)

Orchid Gardens, Carl Philips
6700 Splithand Road
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Raising Rarities, Owen Robinson
PO Box 405
Jacksonville, VT 05342
(802)368-7273
(*adult Cyp parviflorum*, *Cyp pubescens*,
Cyp kentuckiense, *Pogonias*)

Red's Rhodies, Dick Cavender 5920 S.W.
Oberst Lane Sherwood, OR 97140
(503)625-6331
E-Mail: rhodies@pcez.com
(*Cyp franchetii* & *segawai*, *Pleiones*
Bletilla, *Dacylorhiza*)

Roberts Flower Supply
Wayne & Nancy Roberts
12390 Root Road Columbia Station, OH
44028
(440)236-5571 (*Cypripedium*)

Rocky Mountain Orchids
Rodd J. May, PhD
PO Box 105
Bigfork, MT 59911
Fax: (406)837-6441 (*Cypripedium*
montanum, *Cyp parviflorum* & *Cyp*
reginae)

Roslyn Nursery
211 Burrs Lane
Dix Hills, NY 11746
(*adult Cyp alveolus*, *Spiranthes*)

Spangle Creek Lab, Dr. William Steele
21950 County Road 445 Bovey, MN
55709
(218)247-0245
E-Mail: scl@uslink.net; www.uslink.net/~scl/
(*lab grown Cypripedium seedlings*)

Sunshine Farms, Barry Glick
Renick, WV 24966
E-Mail: barrYG@slip.net
(*hardy perennials*, *Spiranthes*,
Aplectrums, *Tipularias*)

Taida Orchids
No. 100 Sec. 3, Chung Shan Rd.
Da Tsun, 51506
Chang Hwa, Taiwan, ROC
(*Asian Cypripediums*)

Van Bourgondien Bros.
245 Route 109, PO Box 1000
Babylon, NY 11702-9004
(800)622-9959 (516) 669-1228 FAX
E-Mail: blooms@dutchbulbs.com
(*Bletilla striata*, *Habenaria radiata*)

We-Du Nurseries
Route # 5, Box 724
Marion, NC 28752

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Earthspirit Farm is located 12 minutes south of the Madison Beltline. Go south on Hwy 14; you will reach Oak Hill Road just south of Oregon. Turn left (east) and go 1/2 mile. You will see a few of the more than 20 gardens from the road.

The nursery is open (May 16th) on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10 am -4 pm or by appointment. Open garden on July 20, 21, 27.

I hope you can come to see us, and cut down the weeding by taking a plant home with you! .

Jean Bawden, Earthspirit Farm
4385 Oak Hill Road, Oregon, WI 53575
835-8907, bdn7458@mailbag.com



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3. Lettuce be Patient.
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No Garden Should be 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. Tyyme for Each Other.
2. Thyme for Family.
3. Thyme for Friends.

Submitted by Nancy Hogan