



The BACK FENCE

Check out the local MG website: www.muextension.missouri.edu/gkcmg/

New flowering plants for 2009

by Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006

What's new in flowering plants? An overwhelming number of annuals and perennials! Lori Gatzemeyer of Bloomers Greenhouse, located on Missouri 291 Highway just north of the Missouri River bridge, is offering at least 19 new plant varieties this spring. They include new colors of old favorites such as Saffron Superbells®, Intensia® Neon Pink phlox and Fishnet Stockings coleus. A perusal of online offerings revealed a myriad of Profusion Zinnias from pale to deep apricot, and even double profusions in cherry, orange, white and fire.

With so many new varieties available, how does a gardener make informed choices? Gatzemeyer says, "Basically, I sit down with my plant broker and he educates me on what was popular at the shows and performance trials the year before. He also knows in advance what P. Allen Smith and others are promoting and what the hype is going to be about for the next season." There are several resources for the home gardener including the Missouri Botanical Gardens Website (www.mobot.org) and the University of Georgia (UGA) plant trials. UGA plant trials rate plants on the basis of the number of flowers, leaf color, insect and disease resistance and overall appearance.

Trial results are posted by year with an index for annuals and perennials by botanical and common name. The Proven Winners website also lists awards received by several of the plants offered.

Some of the plants described below are hybrids introduced for the 2009 growing season. Others have been around for a few years, but are being offered for the first time this year at area greenhouses or were newly offered in 2008 with good results reported. With the exception of the Blitz Begonia chosen for its unusual yellow flower, most are drought or heat tolerant and low-maintenance.

Annuals

Angelface® Summer Snap Dragon
(*Angelonia angustifolia* hybrid)



Images courtesy of Proven Winners unless stated otherwise



Superbells Saffron

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- Blue-Purple flower with green, grape-scented foliage, blooms all season
- Exposure Full Sun, Easy Maintenance, Normal Water Needs
- Height 18-24", Upright habit
- Drought and heat tolerant, Deadheading not necessary, Native to Americas

New plants continued on page 2

New plants continued from page 1

Use in landscapes, containers, combination planting

Summer Snap Dragons were described by one Master Gardener as Snap Dragons on steroids. The Proven Winners website boasts, "cut some of my 18-24 inch tall upright stems covered with snapdragon blue-purple flowers and guess what? In a few days I'll look every bit as bushy as before. So sharpen up those pruners, baby. I look terrific in a vase. You won't see me going all floppy and falling apart in fifteen minutes, no way. I'll keep my looks for 10 days plus. Change the water every other day and it could be 10 plus plus. Container, bed, planter or border: I'll stay my usual fabulous self even in South and Midwest's notorious heat and humidity. By August when most plants look deep fried, I look fresh as an, um, Angelonia."

Winner of 25 awards including 2008 Top 5 from Purdue and 2008 Excellent Rating from Boerner Botanical Garden.

Blitz Begonia (*Hiemalis*)



Image courtesy of Beekenkamp, Netherlands

- Yellow flower with medium green angel-wing shaped foliage, bloom spring to frost
- Exposure full to part sun, shade from afternoon sun, prefers moist, well-drained soil
- Height 12-18", deadhead frequently to prolong blooming

- Use in containers, hanging baskets, great winter-blooming indoor plant

This plant received a 4.13 rating (out of 5) from the University of Georgia Plant Trial in 2006

Flirtation® Pink Twinspace (*Diascia* hybrid)



- Pink flower with green foliage, blooms all season
- Exposure sun or partial shade, easy maintenance, normal water needs
- Height 8-12", mounded habit
- Use in containers, hanging baskets, containers and landscapes. In combinations, intermingles well with other plants as a middle filler.

Winner of nine awards in 2008 including Top Performer at Longwood Gardens and Best in Show at Penn State

Scooter® Flame Skullcap (*Scutellaria* hybrid)



- Also available in barberry, flamingo, white and scarlet colors all with dark green foliage
- Exposure sun or partial sun, easy maintenance, normal water needs

- Height 10-16", upright habit
- Heat tolerant, attractive to hummingbirds, Blooms summer-fall
- Use in landscapes and containers, intermingles to fill in middle of combinations

Fanfare® Spreading Impatiens (*Impatiens salleriana*, *Impatiens hawkeri*) aka Trailing Impatiens, Sun Impatiens



Image courtesy of The Flower Ranch

- Many colors available: coral, fuchsia, orange, orchid, pink sparkle, blush
- Exposure sun or shade (suggest morning sun and afternoon shade), heavy water
- Height 16-20", spreading habit, easy care
- Use in containers, hanging baskets, landscape.
- Most heat-tolerant impatiens series on market

Fanfare Orchid Improved received 4.57 of 5 in 2008 University of Georgia Plant Trials

Perennials

Coneflower Tomato Soup, (*Echinacea* tomato soup hybrid)



Image courtesy of Terra Nova Nurseries

- Hardy in zones 4-9, drought tolerant

- Red flowers with green foliage, blooms late spring to early summer
- Exposure sun, average water needs
Height 24-36", upright habit
- Use in borders, mass plantings or as accent plant
Attracts butterflies, excellent cut or dried flowers

Karalee® Petite Pink Butterfly Flower (*Gaura lindheimeri*)



- Pink flowers with dark green foliage, blooms all summer
- Exposure full sun, moderate maintenance, dry to normal water needs
- Height 12-16", upright habit, drought and heat tolerant, no dead-heading, native to Americas
- Use in landscape or containers as one of the back or middle items
Attracts butterflies, received the 2007 Prairie Bloom award from Kansas State University

Pagoda® Columbine (*Aquilegia* hybrid)



- Hardy in zones 3-8, drought tolerant, blooms spring to early summer
- Colors: blue and white, pink and white, rose and white, white all

with green foliage

- Exposure partial sun, normal water needs, easy maintenance
- Height 12-16", upright habit
- Use in landscape or containers, attracts birds and hummingbirds, native to Americas

Garnet Brocade® Sedum (*Hylotelephium* hybrid)



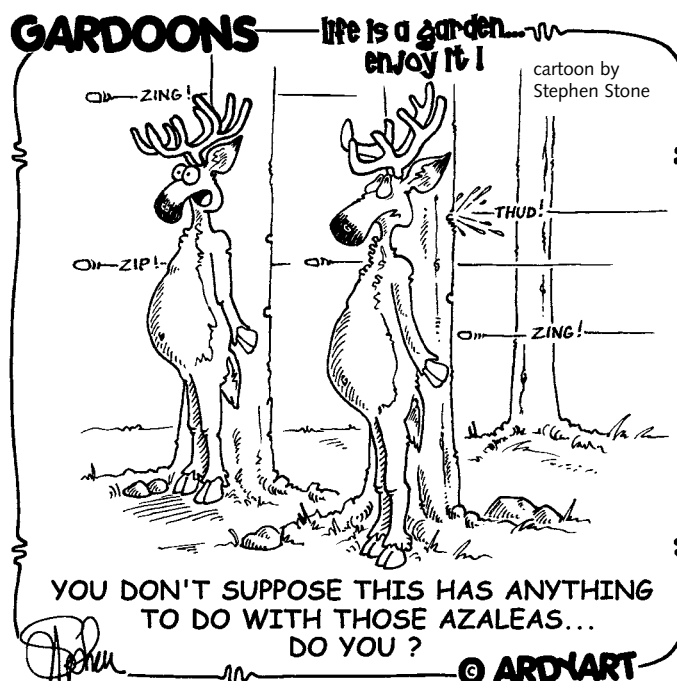
- Hardy in zones 3-11, extremely heat tolerant, drought tolerant
- Red flowers with red foliage, blooms summer and fall, provides winter interest
- Exposure full sun, dry to normal water needs, easy maintenance
- Height 12-16", upright habit
- Use in landscape and containers, attracts birds, butterflies and hummingbirds

Tuscan Sun Perennial Sunflower (*Heliopsis*)



- Hardy in zones 3-9, heat tolerant, good cut flowers
- Yellow flowers with green foliage, blooms summer, attracts butterflies
- Exposure full sun, dry to normal water needs, easy maintenance
- Height 12-20", upright habit
- Use in landscapes and containers, deadhead to encourage additional blooming

It's planting time! Explore your local nursery, favorite catalog or online shopping venue for new varieties, splashy colors and appealing foliage. Some quick online research will help you determine if the plants are suitable for your area growing conditions and fill the bill for the look you want to achieve. Try something new this year.



Inspiration from Fort Worth

By Kellie Rodriguez, Class of 2005

If you ever find yourself in Texas, make sure you take a turn at the oldest botanic garden in Texas . . . in the sophisticated cowboy city of Fort Worth (that's a compliment!). Located in the heart of the city's Cultural District, the Fort Worth Botanic Garden offers 21 specialty gardens to include a sensational 7-acre Japanese Garden—one of the best in the Nation.

I had the privilege to visit these beautiful grounds in early spring. And, although it was still too early to see many of the promised blooms from bud-heavy branches, it was still a great visit. The foundational elements are so well established in this garden. Great thought, time and loving hands went into this ground to make it a structural delight. And when I say established . . . the garden was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service.

The advantage I had at this time of year was to enjoy the hardscapes. Any gardener that has set stone or built structures will appreciate the forethought and work that has gone into the designs. Hundreds of tons of local rock has been used to create stunning walkways and walls that are both formal and natural at the same time.

The garden originally began over 75 years ago as a depression-era employment opportunity. Constructed in 1933, the historic rose garden was shaped in beautiful classic design and is a perfect setting for weddings and garden parties. Hundreds of rose bushes are arranged amidst charming gazebos and fountains.

Originally the site of an old gravel pit, the Japanese Garden was constructed in 1970. Designers worked around all preexisting trees and some

massive stones embedded on the site to provide for a natural setting. Great effort was made to create vertical interest with Asian structures, fencing and bridges. Paths meander through rustling bamboo, grasses and foliage, drawing you deeper into the depths of the garden. A surprise turn will bring you to a waterfall and the banks of an emerald pond laden with giant Koi. This garden provides more than a place to treasure plants, but also a place to meditate, relax and nourish the senses.

Gloriously sweet-smelling spring bulbs are blooming, especially in the Perennial and Fragrance gardens. I spotted Hyacinths, Narcissus and Lily of the Valley, along with so many other favorites. Pansies of all colors were planted in containers and used as border plants in flower beds.

The fragrant Mexican plum trees and the magenta-colored Redbuds were absolutely loaded. They used the Redbud cultivar 'Avondale' which really make big impact across a field or garden. Viburnum bush branches were also weighted down with buds ready to open.

Another unique addition to this botanic garden is their Begonia Species

Bank. It may be one of the largest begonia banks in the world. Its mission is to ensure the maintenance and expansion of the collection, to create



Japanese Garden

a library for cross-referencing, to collaborate with other institutions and educating the public on the begonia species. If you're into begonias, you need to visit! Many of the begonias are in the Exhibition Greenhouse, and the rest are displayed in the 10,000 square foot Conservatory Garden, along with other lush tropical plants such as orchids, palms, banana trees and bromeliads.

All in all, the Fort Worth Botanic Garden boasts over 2,500 species of native and exotic plants on their 33-acre grounds including many other specialty gardens than I describe here.



Conservatory Garden

It's the perfect full-day's worth of stimulation for an eager gardener. I hope you have the chance to visit and enjoy.

For more information, visit their website at www.fwb.org, or give them a call at 817-871-7686.

Planting 4-season pleasure

by Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006



Winter is the last thing we want to think about when we begin our spring puttering in the yard. But the fact is that summer follows spring, followed by autumn and we are back to winter with its usual mixture of gray skies and dull landscape

accented with white frost, ice and snow. What will be left after we have enjoyed the parade of yellow, pink and purple spring bulb offerings, the display of red and orange flowering summer delights and the last yellow chrysanthemum or red leaf of autumn? Some planning prior to selecting and planting each year will give our landscape the elements needed to provide a pleasant view even during the dead of winter. Consider color, texture, staying power and placement.

Color - In addition to the well-known evergreen pines, firs, spruces and junipers, there are other plants that remain green during most or all of the year. These include ground cover such as ivy and bungleweed (*Ajuga*) and herbs such as rosemary and mint. Sage and lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantine*) also retain their gray/green tone deep into winter. To add a splash of red, consider the deciduous winterberry with its masses of bright red berries or red twig dogwood.

Texture - To fully enjoy a winter garden, it's important to NOT be too neat in fall cleanup. Many plants develop exotic seed heads which will not be enjoyed if the plants are removed or cut back. These include the spectacular plumes on maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) and fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*). Virginia wild rye (*Elymus virginicus*) and river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) are recommended for rain gardens and maintain their graceful form and seed heads all winter. Little blue stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) displays its stiff umber blades against fallen leaves or snow. Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) and the sedge grasses gradually turn to tan tones and retain their interesting spiky shape. Red or pink fall flowers of autumn joy (*Sedum Spectabile*) become lacy, dark brown clusters on foot-tall stems. White flowers of the angels blush hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculate*) turn to opaque ivory ovals with brown veins and are surrounded by tiny chocolate-colored seed heads. The velvety texture of lamb's ears can be enjoyed until early spring before they are removed to reveal the new season's growth. Wild flower meadows display an abundance of texture and color all year. The seed

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heads of yellow and orange black-eyed susans (*Rudbeckia*) and purple cone flowers (*Echinacea*) become dark brown buttons, providing food to birds as well as candy to the human eye. Early goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*), New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*) and wild ageratum (*Conoclinium coelstinum*) also maintain their form and seed heads throughout winter.

Staying power - In addition to going dormant, many perennials simply disappear during the colder months. Hostas are wonderful in shade gardens, but do their disappearing act in early fall and do not show their lovely green shoots until late spring. Lilyturf (*Liriope*) stays with us all winter. Big blue lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*) bears dark berries that persist into winter and creeping lilyturf (*Liriope spicata*) is a great 4-season ground-cover, staying green through most of the year. Evergreen holly, boxwoods, pines, spruces and yews retain their splendor all year and provide warmth and shelter for our feathered friends on the coldest days. The native grasses and wildflowers hold on to their form until they are cut down in early spring, while their seed heads provide visual interest and food for wildlife.

Hardscape elements such as garden signs and trellises take on a different look during winter and can be especially charming when covered in frost or snow. Stepping stones, figurines and all-season planters also continue to provide interest all year. However, terra cotta containers and other pottery items should be stored inside as they will crack if allowed to freeze.

Placement - Put your 4-season plants where you will enjoy them on the coldest, snowiest days of the year. Outside the breakfast room window where you enjoy your morning coffee while watching the birds, under

your home-office window where you keep up with your bill paying or correspondence, along the path you use for daily doggie walks. All are good places for small winter gardens or simply incorporating some 4-season plants in the flower bed, rain garden or landscape. Contrast color and texture.

The dried flowers of the angels blush hydrangea are set off by the background of the dark green yew bushes. A ground cover of English ivy accentuates red winterberries. *The Missouri Gardener's Guide* by Mike Miller includes companion planting and design information to assist in garden and landscape design.

Several times a day I pass by the rain garden and wild flower meadow when walking my dogs. I enjoy the experience no matter what the season. Bending river oat seed heads dance in the wind whether they are green

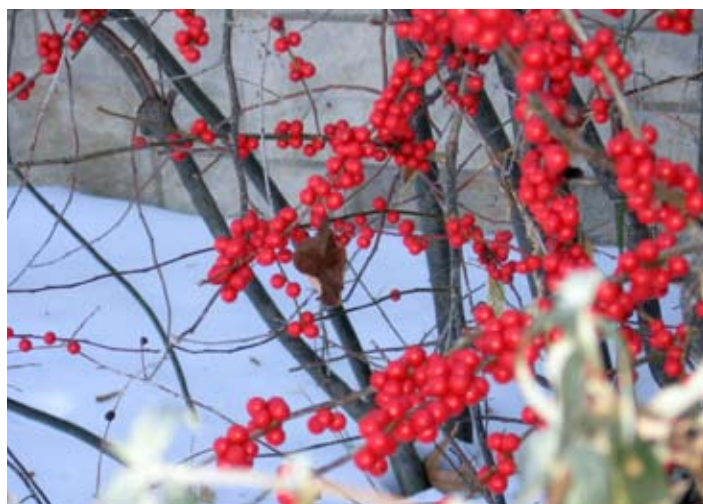
in August or wheat-colored in January. The purple cone flowers are beautiful when in bloom and covered with butterflies or as dried brown orbs offering seed to the finches. When I need a



Bird staying warm



Ornamental grass in winter



Winterberry

break from working on my computer, I glance out the window at birds fluttering around the dried wildflowers or the bunny foraging on the ground among the dried leaves. While eager



Autumn leaves



New England Aster and Golden Rod in autumn



Spring wildflowers

for spring, the wildlife and I enjoy the fruits of last year's labor in our 4-season landscape.

2009 Calendar of gardening events

by Becky Peck, Class of 2003

Calendar key with acronyms and contact information on page 14.

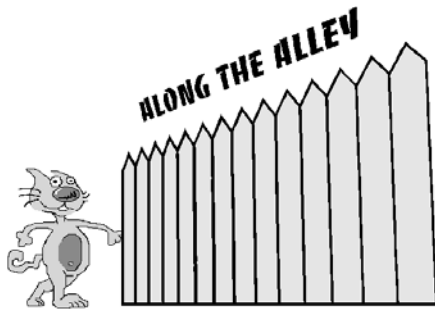
APRIL

- 3 F MOBOT-Arbor Day tree giveaway at the Kemper Center for Home Gardening
- 4-5 SA-SU POWELL-March 14-May 17 Orchids & Epiphytes Exhibit. In the conservatory from 9-5 through March 31 and 9-6 beginning April 1. April 4 and 5 from 11-3 daily, members of the Orchid Society of Greater Kansas City are here to answer your questions. Orchids from Birds Botanicals available for sale.
- 5 SU POWELL-Orchids & Epiphytes Exhibit continues.
- 10 F SVIO-Show wrap-up, awards, and finalize field trip.
- 18 SA POWELL celebrates Earth Day. Bring your questions for the horticulture staff. Check the web site for Easter activities yet to be determined.
- 19 SU OSGKC Growers Tour. Go to www.osgkc.org for further information.
- 20 M MVIO
- 23 TH MOBOT-Dr. May Berenbaum, Chairman of the Department of Entomology at the University of Illinois and the nation's leading expert on the topic. She is an expert on "Colony Collapse Disorder" (honeybees). Tickets required.
- 28 TU JOCOK-EarthKind roses—an approach to gardening—at 7 p.m.

MAY

- 1 F POWELL-Friends members can preview the spring plant sale from 5-7 p.m.
- 2-3 SA-SU POWELL-spring plant sale (biggest of the year) with perennials, annuals, herbs, vegetables, trees, shrubs, and some of the Gardens best performers.
- 7 TH MOBOT greenhouse plant sale
- 8 F SVIO-Field trip
POWELL-Friday at the Fountain with themed cocktails and music, followed by a moonlit stroll of the gardens. Visit the website for pricing details.
- 9 SA MOBOT-Greater St. Louis Dahlia Society sale
MOBOT-Greater St. Louis Iris Society show
- 10 SU POWELL-Mother's Day brunch and outdoor concert on the lawn. Make reservations: 816-697-2600 X307
MOBOT-Greater St. Louis Dahlia Society sale
- 14 TH MGs—Gardener's Gathering 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Discovery Center. Mary Ann Fink of Grow Excellence addresses Shade Gardening, Going Green, Natives?
- 15 F MGs-Workshop related to previous day's speaker. Time and location TBA.
- 16 SA POWELL-Iris weekend at the Iris Hill with Dr. Norlan Henderson
MOBOT-St. Louis Horticultural Society sale
- 17 SU CAC

Calendar continued on page 9



by Joanne Couture, Class of 1991

Play GARDEN JEOPARDY: Many botanical pronunciations are intimidating. Tongue-test these common plants: *Echinops* (globe thistle)...*Lysimachia*... *Agastache* (licorice mint), *Weigela*... *Cotoneaster*. (Solution at end of article)

A hearty welcome to the Class of 2008, a flourishing group of “garden junkies.” Being a Master Gardener does not mean we’ve mastered gardening. We’re constantly learning—like these tips from the class. (Note: Google provided extra info on plants mentioned in the following interviews. Access the site for even more specifics.)

Jill Frizelle’s Kearney garden “Wren Hill” produces Canada Red sweet rhubarb, “my favorite, with big ribs that cook up pink and delicious. I add a touch of raspberry flavoring to the sauce for added zip. When I harvest the first batch, usually around Memorial Day, I carefully pull the stalks from the base. I cut the wide leaves to use as a ground cover around other vegetables. After harvesting the first batch, I topdress with some composted manure, and three weeks later I can harvest again. That is some good stuff!” Properly planted, rhubarb remains productive for decades. (Note: Jill correctly pulls—not cuts—the stalks from the plant.)

Phyllis Dean, after growing up in New Mexico’s desert country, has become a top-notch rosarian with ten long-lived plants. ‘Tropicana’ is 29 years old, and ‘Double Delight,’ is 17! A favorite is ‘Betty Boop,’ “a huge bloomer that keeps up a beauti-

ful display all the time.” Her secret? Besides the usual routine, she waters them daily at the base, fertilizes monthly and feeds them “banana peelings cut up and worked into the soil.” Another old-timer is her ‘Peegee’ *Hydrangea paniculata*. “My neighbor gave me a start when I moved to my home 30 years ago.” A MG favorite, it’s an unusual tree-form 10-15’ tall. Cascades of ivory flowers turn pink, then purple, in the fall. Phyllis also has lilacs, a variegated dogwood, many daylilies and tulips. What she’ll never plant again? “*Liriope* (lily turf). I made it an edging bordering my front sidewalk. It traveled and traveled. It has taken four years to be rid of it.”

Marty Williams likes “anything that attracts butterflies, bees, or hummingbirds” such as annuals ‘Lady in Red’ *salvia*, cardinal climber, and pentas. Perennial favorites include *buddleia*, *agastache*, ‘Knockout’ roses, *nepeta* (catnip) and *salvia* ‘May Night,’ a 1997 Plant of the Year, a dark purple dependable performer that welcomes hummers and butterflies but also resists deer. A water garden devotee, Marty built a 10’ X 6’ pond plus a waterfall. “It’s a wonderful source of sound and critter entertainment.... There are now about 40-45 fish, most of whom have NAMES, courtesy of my wife.” Marty likes to plant heirloom tomatoes and red/yellow bell peppers but will “never again” plant chameleon, *Houttuynia cordata*—“very invasive plus an unpleasant odor when stems are broken.”

One of **Gary Helmers’** favorites is ‘Seven Sons’ shrub “which I had to have when I saw it at Powell Gardens” A Plant of Merit, *Heptacodium miconiodes* has terminal clusters of creamy white flowers attractive to autumn butterflies, followed by purple-red fruit. Its tan bark exfoliates to brown inner bark for winter interest. Perennials on Gary’s must-plant-this-spring list: peonies ‘Garden Treasure’ (yellow)

and ‘Lorelei’ (pink) . . . *Polemonium yezoense* ‘Purple Rain’ aka Jacob’s Ladder, with large violet blooms and attractive purple-bronze leaves... *Eurphorbia* ‘Jessie’ with yellow bracts edged with orange-red, and spectacular fall foliage that turns yellow, green, orange, and red...and *Filiperdula* ‘Queen of Prairie,’ a native whose large plumed pink flowerheads look great in the back border.

Terry Blair Michel has lived in many planting zones. Originally from Independence, she spent 16 years in Texas and 10 in Vermont before returning home two years ago. So far she’s planted some front beds with “a mix of perennials and annual purple fountain grass, two lilacs, a butterfly bush, two weigelas, two sand cherries that the resident rabbit tried to eat last summer, a purple maple, a redbud, a purple leaf plum, and a very ill-looking crabapple.” One big problem: a long slope “with lots of water running through my yard.” She’s checking into installing a rain barrel and “at least two rain gardens.” Terry asks, “Does anyone have any ideas about the best way to start? And will terracing be a good way to slow the water on the slopes?” Contact Terry with your good advice, MGs!

Kathee Godowski’s 25 acres in Peculiar include a one-acre garden generously enriched with composted poop from six horses (including a team of Belgians), cows and chickens. She’s had “fabulous luck with potatoes, usually the Yukon golds,” plus sweet potatoes, tomatoes (grown with basil, which “seems to bring out the flavor”) and carrots for her horses. She’d like to try espaliered fruit trees, new varieties of potatoes and spinach, and learn to preserve as much as possible. Her five big dogs keep deer away, and “my chickens take care of the bugs.”

Lori Wohlschlaeger started a rain garden in her back yard last year with

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Alley continued from page 8

Missouri native wildflowers to attract butterflies. “The swamp milkweed has done very well...the monarchs love it,” plus orange coneflower and purple poppy mallow. Lori plans to add more milkweeds and verbena or lantana. Her regular garden is “a work in progress.” A few iris and daffodil and three peonies left by the previous owner “gave us almost a blank canvas to work with—to build it the way we like.”

Sowings

Hurrah and welcome to **Kelly Vandendaele** (2004), new chair of the Gardeners Gathering. Despite a busy career as Education Coordinator at North Kansas City Hospital, last year Kelly “started a rain garden with lots of natives and it really worked. It filled up a number of times and kept the area I wanted dry—dry!” The natives “of course did the best, both in sun and shade”: *Baptisia australis*, *Asclepius tuberosa* (butterfly weed), *Tradescantia chinensis*, and *Phlox divaricata* blue. Kelly’s shade garden includes her favorite hosta plus native ferns: ‘Maiden Hair’ *Adiantum podatum* (also a dependable house plant) . . . ‘Christmas fern’ *Polystichum acrostichoides* (formerly a popular holiday decoration, its fronds stay green all winter)...and ‘Hairy-Lip’ aka ‘Wooly-Lip’ fern *Cheilanthes lanosa* with its hirsute lower fronds.

Did your mature locust tree look dead last year? Kansas City’s forester, Forest (!) Decker, says not to worry.” They were affected by a leaf scorch bacteria late in the summer and dropped their leaves early.” They’ll be checked this spring and pruned of dead branches. “But overall the trees should be fine.”

However, an annual nuisance is the blizzard of those woody, burlike sweetgum seedpods from trees the city planted years ago. They blanket yards, clog drains, torment barefoot kids. One use: as a spikey mulch at the base of slug-and-snail hors d’oeuvres like hosta and salad greens.

GARDEN JEOPARDY Solutions: What are: eh-KY-nops...liss-un-MAY-kee-uh . . . ag-us-TACK-ee...wye-JEE-luh...kuh-toe-nee-ASS-ter? (From Horticulture magazine, Sept/Oct 2004)



Calendar continued from page 7

- 19 SU POWELL-Iris weekend continues
- 18 M MVIO
- 21 TH MOBOT-Herbal Medicines and Botanical Dietary Supplements: Facts and Fiction by Dr. Wendy Applequist, Assistance Curator of Economic Botany at William. L. Brown Center for Plant Genetic Resources.
- 23 SA POWELL-Iris weekend at the Iris Hill with Dr. Norlan Henderson
MOBOT-Rose Society of Greater St. Louis show; Gateway Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society sale
- 24 SU POWELL-Iris weekend continues.

JUNE

- 6 SA MOBOT-St. Louis Carnivorous Plant Society show and sale
- 12 F MGs Garden Tour
SVIO-End of season potluck and raffle. Bring 2-3 violet related items for raffle.
- 13 SA MGs Garden Tour
MOBOT-Metropolitan St. Louis African Violet Council show and sale
- 14 SU CAC
POWELL-Harvest Garden Grand Opening
MOBOT-Metropolitan St. Louis African Violet Council show and sale
- 15 M MVIO
- 18 TH MOBOT-Dr. David Wolfe, professor of plant ecology, Cornell University, is the leading authority on the effects of climate change and rising carbon dioxide in plants, soils and ecosystems. Evening and afternoon sessions require tickets purchased in advance.
- 20 SA MOBOT-Mid America Regional Lily Society show
- 21 SU POWELL celebrates Father’s Day with Café specials and family-friendly performance in the Gardens.
MOBOT-Mid America Regional Lily Society show
- 27 SA MOBOT-West County Daylily Club sale

JULY

- 3 F POWELL-Booms & Blooms Festival features hundreds of daylilies, a daylily sale, children’s activities and special music. Tonight, there is a performance by the Lee’s Summit Symphony Orchestra, followed by a fireworks display over the lake.
- 4 SA POWELL-Booms & Blooms Festival continues
- 9 TH MGs-Gardener’s Gathering 6:30-8:30 at the Discovery Center. Speaker: Duane Hoover of Kauffman Gardens.
- 10 F POWELL-Friday at the Fountain with themed cocktails and music, followed by a moonlit stroll of the gardens. Visit the website for pricing details.
- 11-12 SA-SU WATER-Public Tour 9-5 daily.
- 17 F MOBOT-Afternoon lecture series focused on the science, study, and business of plants in St. Louis’s “BioBelt” region.

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In praise of *Bufo americanus*

By Leah Ruehl, Intern, Class of 2008

Aclaimed for their voracious appetites for grubs, slugs, worms, insects, snails, or any small invertebrate they can fit into their mouths, toads should be valued for their role in pest control. These charming amphibians even use their front legs to stuff in larger food. One source credits toads with the ability to eat 1,000 insects a day.

How can you tell if you have met a toad or a frog? Toads are actually frogs. Toads are fat-bodied, where frogs are slim. Toads have warts while a frog's skin is smooth. Their bodies are characterized by short hind legs, warty, dry skin, and bony ridges on top of their heads. Toads are usually grayish or brownish in color. Unlike frogs, most toads do not have teeth. (Who knew that frogs have teeth!) The "warts" are not true warts, but bumpy skin glands. Their skin does contain many glands that produce a mild poison to protect toads from predators. Although humans cannot get warts from touching toads, the mild poisons can be irritating. You should always wash your hands after handling toads.

To reproduce, toads need a semi-permanent freshwater pond or pool. Males arrive at a water source early, and sing long, trilling songs to attract the ladies. Male toads are extremely amorous, approaching lady toads, frogs, and according to one researcher, hands and fingers. Toad eggs are laid in water in long strings of up to 15,000 eggs. The small tadpoles feed on plants. By summer July toadlets can be seen hopping around the shore. It takes 2-3 years for a toad to be ready to reproduce.

To attract these prodigious hunters, you must consider organic gardening.

The use of chemical pesticides is deadly to toads. To encourage toads to locate in your garden, provide cover and a source of moisture. Toads do not drink water, but absorb moisture through their skin. Rock gardens are very attractive to toads because they provide cool, moist, sheltered environments and attract insects. The use of toad houses is recommended. These are totally charming! Look in gardening specialty stores, or even in the gardening section of Wal-Mart. Check with www.toadilytoads.com/gardentoads.html for additional sources.

Although *Bufo americanus* is not listed as endangered, amphibians around the world are in trouble. The destruction of water resources through forest destruction and pollution has had a negative influence on amphibian populations. Off-road vehicles stir up silt and destroy egg clutches. The introduction of non-native fish species has contributed to population declines in the west. Road building and urban sprawl disrupt the trek to the water resources needed to reproduce. Habitat destruction puts toads in the same boat as all other declining wildlife. Since their decline marks serious environmental change, scientists have referred to amphibians as bioindicators. As gardeners we can make a positive ecological impact by enjoying and encouraging these



I think we're cute!



Images courtesy of Toadilytoads.com

homely but valuable garden inhabitants.

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- 18 SA POWELL-Sweet Corn Festival. Sample fresh-picked corn, shop for corn, and more.
- 19 SU CAC
- 23 TH MOBOT-Dr. Tom Swetnam, professor of dendrochronology (the study of environmental and cultural history using tree rings) at the University of Arizona reads tree rings to track drought, temperature changes, and fires throughout history.
- 25 SA MOBOT-July 25 through August 2 is the Henry Shaw Cactus Society show and sale

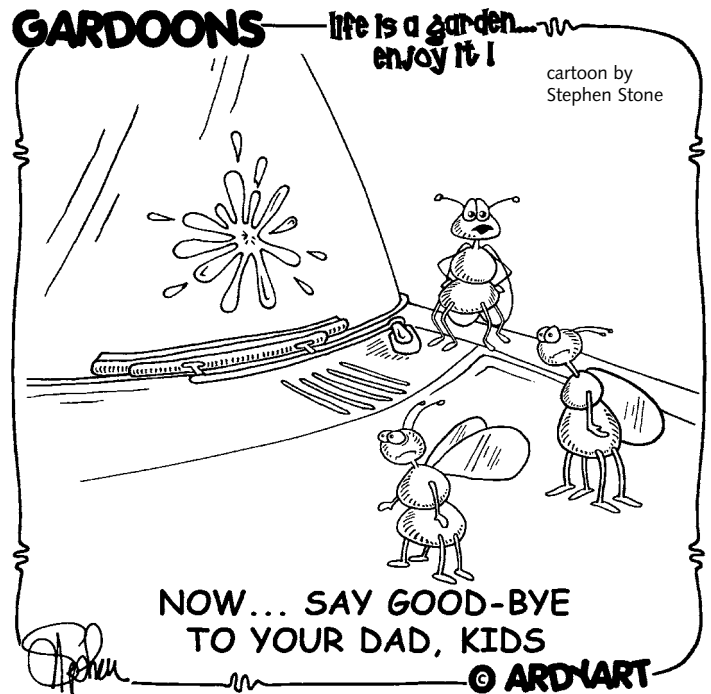
AUGUST

- 6 TH POWELL-Festival of Butterflies
- 7 F POWELL-Festival of Butterflies
- 8 SA CAC show and sale 9-5
POWELL-Festival of Butterflies
MOBOT-Daylily Association sale
- 9 SU CAC show and sale 11-3
POWELL-Festival of Butterflies
MOBOT-Orchid Society of Greater St. Louis auction
- 14-16 F-SU POWELL-Festival of Butterflies
- 20 TH MOBOT-Adam Gollner, author of *The Fruit Hunters: A Story of Nature, Obsession, Commerce and Adventures* speaks. He explores the ecological issues in the diversity of fruit from the delicious to the medicinal, hallucinogenic, and lethal. He traces the life of mass produced fruits and how they are created, grown and marketed, and explores the underworld of fruits that are inaccessible, ignored and even forbidden in the Western world. Pre-purchased tickets for the afternoon and evening presentations are required.
- 22 SA POWELL-Tomato Festival. Celebrate America's favorite backyard crop.
MOBOT-Iris sale
- 23 SU MOBOT-Iris sale
- 29-30 SA-SU MOBOT-Gateway West Gesneriad Society show and sale

SEPTEMBER

- 8 TU KCROSE Annual Rose Show
- 10 TH MGs-Gardener's Gathering 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Discovery Center. The MGs from the 2009 Garden Tour will be spotlighted. They will share preparation for the tour, favorite plants, practical tips, garden features and more. Door prizes!
- 11 F POWELL-Friday at the Fountain with themed cocktails and music, followed by a moonlit stroll of the gardens. Visit the website for pricing details.
- 12 SA POWELL-Chili Pepper Festival at the Heartland Garden with salsa contests, mariachi music, and more.
- 13 SU CAC
- 14 M MVIO

Calendar continued on page 12



“Those new to gardening should know, however, that most gardeners hate to part with dirt, clay pots, pickle jars, really good labels, stakes, tarred twine, and any kind of wooden box. They do not mind giving up a plant that sells for \$40 if they have an extra one, but the other stuff, (which may be worth a dime) it tears the heart to part with.”

~ Henry Mitchell

What's new in the vegetable garden?

By Becky Peck, Class of 2003

In my quest to improve my vegetable gardening production, I thought I'd take a look at the new offerings in the veggie world and share them with you to use in planning your veggie plot. To my amazement, I found more than new varieties of the old-time favorites. I found veggies growing in straw bales and a plant I had never heard of. Let's go there first.

Seeds of Change is offering a new plant called the Oca. This plant is from the oxalis or wood sorrel family (*Oxalidaceae*). It looks like a potato that has been scored on either side with a pirate's sword. The common name is New Zealand yam, among others. Suited to temperate areas, it is resistant to low temperatures and thrives in moderately cool climates. It prefers lots of sun. Freezing will kill the bushy foliage, which resembles clover-like leaves. The roots will be fine down to 20 degrees. You use it similarly to a potato. It even shows



Oca
Image courtesy of www.patnsteph.net/weblog/?page_id=2



Straw bale garden
Image courtesy of www.nicholsgardennursery.com

promise as a container plant for indoor cultivation. Twelve oca tubers run about \$16.

On the Nichols Garden Nursery site (www.nicholsgardennursery.com) the veggies were growing in straw bales! In 2004 Nichols designed the vegetable garden to promote Plant a Row For the Hungry. Straw bale culture was developed by a retired professor from Oregon State, who had done a research project on

the topic. Here are the instructions:

Purchase wheat straw bales because they are the freest of weed seeds and have no perennial weeds. Since they will last at least two planting seasons, make sure they are tied with synthetic twine. Place the

bales on end so the twine is running parallel to the ground. Thoroughly water the bales so they heat up and in about five to seven days will cool back down so you can plant them. Pull out any weed seeds that do spring up. Use a hand fork to rough up the surface. Top with three inches of compost as your top dressing for the seed bed.

Suitable veggie crops for bale culture include tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and greens. Two tomatoes or three peppers per bale is about right. Root crops are not good candidates as the straw restricts growth and makes it hard to harvest. Annual herbs

like cilantro, basil, parsley and chervil should thrive in this medium as well. When you transplant, go with the smaller plants as they are easier to handle. A sharp trowel will make a good spot for the plants. A periodic hydration with a soaker hose will keep the moisture level right. As a side benefit—your aching back doesn't have to bend over so far to pick the fruits of your labor!

Most of the online seed companies will list their new veggies or their top sellers. Jung Seeds (www.jungseeds.com) says its top sellers are Sweetness Hybrid Carrot, Perfect Pick Hybrid Zucchini, Fat 'N Sassy Hybrid Pepper, German Giant Radish, Melody F1 Hybrid Spinach, Packman Hybrid Broccoli, Italian Large leaf Basil, Honey Bear Hybrid Acorn Squash, Amish Paste Tomato, Sweet Slice Hybrid Cucumber and Blue Lake 274 Green Pod Bush Bean. Aren't these names a hoot? How about "Not Slimey Like the Grocery Store Cucumbers," "Fat, Early and Sweet Peppers," or "Varmint-Resistant Lettuce?"

As we progress in our gardening skills, we get picky. We don't want

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the usual Big Boy Tomatoes. We want something more unique and elusive. Baker Heirloom Seeds (www.rareseeds.com) has a listing of the number of varieties of each vegetable and herb that they carry. Check out these numbers: 90 winter squash, 31 sweet peppers, 16 European melons, 49 American melons, 19 Asian and Eastern melons, 68 red tomatoes, 12 white, 18 purple and 34 pink (there are many more), 25 beans, 17 garlic and 67 herbs.

Renee's Garden (reeneegarden.com) lists their new introductions for 2009. Most are flowers, but there is Neon Glow Chard, Ruby and Emerald Duet container lettuce, Asian Baby Leaf Mix gourmet salad lettuce, and Baby Belle, the Mini Salad Pepper.

Nichols Gardens (www.nichols-gardennursery.com) lists several "new and unusual vegetables" for this season. How about Yard-Long Asparagus Bean, Red Noodle? Or Crambe Maritima Sea Kale? More common names would include the



Yard-Long Asparagus Bean, Red Noodle
Image courtesy of The Vegetable Seed Store

following new introductions: Cucumber Sultan, Eggplant Gretel, Mustard Ruby Streak, Endive Frisbee, Cauliflower Veronica, Chard Neon Color Mix, Corn Argent, Corn Ambrosia, Pumpkin Winter Luxury Pie, Squash Bowlers, Lettuce Red Velvet, Lettuce Little Gem, Melon Lambkin, Melon Minerva, Onion Red Marble, and Onion Red Baron. Oh, and don't forget the tomatoes. Try Black Krim, Orange Pixie, and San Marzano.

Last year I discovered a company called Vermont Bean (www.vermontbean.com). Their new listings include a ton of shrub roses of all things. But, in the entire list, one does find some veggies: Beauregard Sweet Potato, Biggie Chili Hybrid Pepper, Biltmore Hybrid Tomatoes, Carnival Hybrid Tomatoes, Crest F Hybrid Watermelon, Cupid Hybrid Tomato, Hillbilly Tomatoes, Mokum Hybrid Carrot, and Juliet Tomatoes. Tomatoes are a favorite for every gardener and this year, the new listings abound.

Leave it to Johnnys (www.johnnyseeds.com) to have some truly unique additions this year. The specialty cabbage, Caraflex, is described as "Almost dangerously pointed mini cabbage." Ouch. Shouldn't we have descriptions what would cause one to want to put it in their mouth? Also in the list are Meloro the Canary Melon, Discovery the wild arugula, Clodia the endive, Sweet Mojo the grape tomato, Korridor the white kohlrabi, and Barbados the mini head of lettuce.

Park (www.parkseed.com) has some striped Italian Harvest Hybrid Organic Squash. The picture looks like zucchini. Gretel the Eggplant is also there. From the listings it might also appear that they have the corner



Crambe Maritima Sea Kale
Image courtesy of Wikipedia

on the Profusion Zinnias in a lot of different colors.

The first time I ever ordered garden seeds, it was from Burpee (www.burpee.com) 'cause mom and dad said that was where all good gardeners got their seeds! Try Burpee's Hot Pepper Ristra Cayenne Hybrid (excessive name length there), Sweet Pepper Pinot Noir Hybrid, Basil Carnival, Tomato Black Truffle Hybrid, Triple Crown XP Hybrid Corn, Sweet Seedless Hybrid Tomato, Twice as Nice Hybrid Melon (this one tells you when to harvest it!), Lettuce Braveheart, and Watermelon Snack Pack Hybrid,

Let me conclude by saying that Seeds of Change (www.seedsofchange.com) has got a very long list of new vegetable varieties from celery to corn, eggplant to rhubarb—and OCA. Gotta have an oca.



Neon Glow Chard
Image courtesy of www.gardenshare.blogspot.com



Illustration by Laurie Chipman

The Back Fence

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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
 Extension

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19 SA Heart of America Gesneriad Society annual show and sale 10-3 Loose Park Garden Center

25-27 F-SU MOBOT-Greater St. Louis Dahlia Society show

KEY:

CAC = Kansas City Cactus and Succulent Society. All regular meetings at 1:30 p.m. at the Loose Park Garden Center unless otherwise noted. Each meeting features a program and a business meeting. Confirm with Barbara Roy at 913-438-5518.

SVIO = SHO ME African Violet Club. Monthly meetings are 11 a.m. at Loose Park Garden Center except as noted. Confirm with the Loose Park Garden Center at 816-784-5300.

MVIO = Mid America African Violet Society. Meetings are 6-8 p.m. at the Loose Park Garden Center. Contact Lynn Canning, President, at lcanning@sbcglobal.net.

POWELL = Event at Powell Gardens. Further info at www.powellgardens.org or call 816-697-2600.

MGs = a Master Gardeners of Greater Kansas City activity.

K = K-State Extension.

JOCOK = Johnson County K-State Extension classes. Website is www.johnson.ksu.edu. For information or to register, call 913-715-7000. Classes held at the Sunset Drive Office Building.

MOBOT = Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. Find further information at www.mobot.org under "Events." Afternoon and evening sessions require pre-purchased tickets.



"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments."

~ Janet Kilburn Phillips

