

SNIPPETS FROM THE EDITOR'S GARDEN

I know I always say things like this, but this time I mean it: I truly can't believe that it's almost time for the roses to bloom. I haven't even finished appreciating the tulips! The calendar is just moving way too fast, or is that that I'm moving slower and slower?

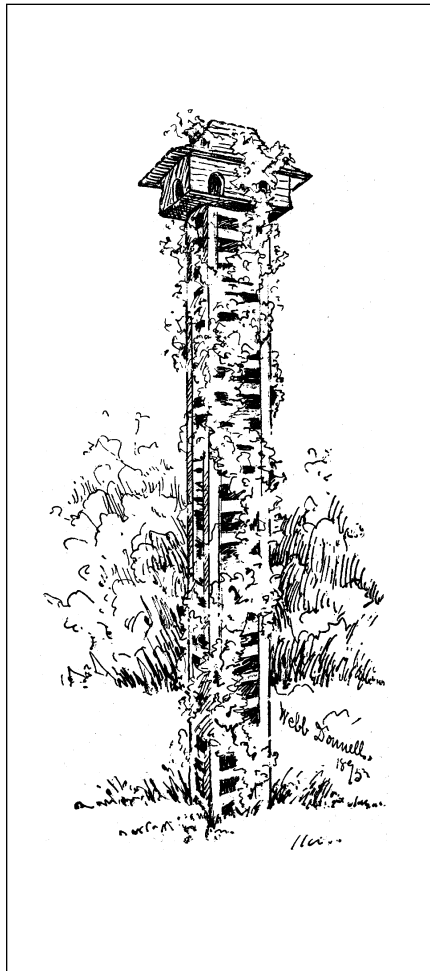
PERENNIALS AND ANNUALS

Even with its weeds, the gardens are glorious. Just now, the "birdbath" garden (a huge circle of four quadrants) is mostly purple. With the green foliage for a backdrop, the colors are in perfect harmony: Tulip 'Cum Laude' is the latest tulip to finish blooming, and found itself having a great conversation with Allium 'Purple Sensation'. Oddly, the Allium 'Purple Sensation' that I planted in 1997 is not the same color as the ones I planted in 1998. Two different colors: one a vivid violet, the other a subdued purple. Guess which one I prefer?

Along with unbelievably showy, deep blue Columbine, everywhere there are purple Violas. So cute and happy. I have zillions, and yet I find myself transplanting the wee babies as if they were scarce. The violas provide ever-taller socks for the roses and skirts for the dead tulip foliage, so they are helpful plants as well. If I had attended high school with them, I would have thought they were the pretty, perky girls who bounced along ubiquitously and with no effort.

The Undaunted Garden by Lauren Springer is a book I've touted many a

time for you plant-o-holics. In it, she recommended a plant called *Dracocephalum nutans*. More or less unfortunately, I didn't heed Springer's advice to plant this in a "hell strip": that miserable plot of dried up dirt that bakes in full sun. Instead, I planted it in luscious soil in the "birdbath garden", where it provides a subdued daytime purple, weaving in and around iris and hanging around with monarda, and becoming luminous in the evening. Alas, it is a mint, and so it loves, loves, loves to wander in these fertile conditions. Unlike a bad drunk, however, you can easily kick it out.



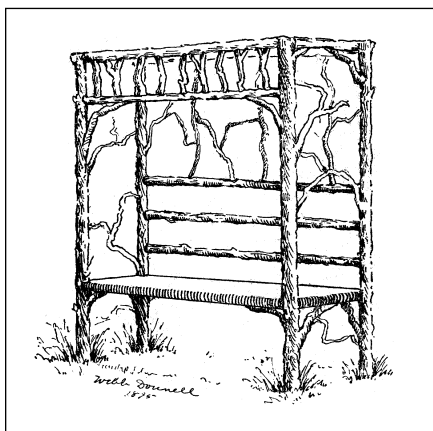
Springer also advises that the purple is much stronger in color in less-fertile soil, so don't repeat my mistake. Plant it on the parkway.

Speaking of the parkway, I just visited the embankment by the road and, presto! Another plant has bit the dust. This time it just disappeared without a trace. I am so disappointed: it was the better half of two (one already died) *Campanula americana*. I searched high and low for this wildflower after seeing it in a woods later bulldozed, and found it for sale at *Enders Greenhouse* in Rockford, IL. *Enders*, by the way, is closing next year so that owner Anne Meyer can retire. She has the best selection of native plants in the region, so I hope she'll pass the baton to someone else equally as knowledgeable.

The spring-blooming veronicas are my new fave-rave. My love affair starts with *Veronica gentianoides*, a 12" spike of pale blue which bloomed very early and held on for a month. Its cultivar, *V. g.* 'Variegata' has waxy, green and white leaves and flax-blue flowers. Then there's a trio of four that have teen-iney flowers in various shades of periwinkle blue or light purple but different foliages or habits: *V. x* 'Waterperry', a petite (I mean it: let's say 5" max) periwinkle blue creeper; *V. armena* is much the same, except that it has spiky gray-blue leaves; *V. peduncularis* 'Georgia Blue', and *Veronica repens*: the ultimate mat of weed-smothering blue. I started with a tiny snip of *V. repens* in 1998 and it's more than 24" around now. If you want a perfect blue combination, pair it with Forget Me Nots (*Myosotis*) and begin to

swoon. If you interplant both with sky blue *Iris germanica* 'Sapphire Hills' you will wet your pants with joy.

I "do" a fair number of annuals, finding them indispensable in filling the holes left by the dead lavatera and its tree-wide stump, for example, or for figuring out ultimate color schemes (petunias are excellent for deciding what color will work at a distance). Now there's a book to help us choose: *Discovering Annuals* by Graham Rice. We won't hold it totally against him that he's English and can discuss (cool summer loving) plants like Wallflowers [*Erysimum*] with ease, but he's a hoot to read. Talk about opinionated! I adore him! Here's a typical quote: "Amazingly, wallflowers are still sold in



Britain in bundles of a dozen or twenty plants, almost invariably in mixed colors only and with all the soil shaken from the roots. They're pulled from a bucket of murky water and wrapped in old newspaper—the better to soak your car seat on the way home". This man is a real gardener: I think he's tried every one of these plants in every possible environment. Very observant!

THE WOODIES

If it's the end of May, the Fringetree [*Chionanthus virginicus*] is in full

bloom and full peppery (?) fragrance. Or maybe it smells like corn tortillas? Nonetheless, here's what I say: get one.

Want to know what woody plants I bought this spring? Among others, I brought home a *Fagus sylvatica* 'Roseo Marginata', which has the most fantastic hot-hot pink edges on the leaves. I can't imagine why garden centers don't stock these ultra-showy trees—seems to me they'd last about 10 seconds on

the lot. Anyway, I just finished planting it on the north side of the house, where I can see it from my office. I count my blessings: I am incredibly graced by God to be able to play with such plants.

What other goodies? How about four varieties of oakleaf hydrangea [*Hydrangea quercifolia*]? I'm going to try all of them (species; 'Alice'; 'Snow Queen'; and 'Sikes Dwarf') in almost

SHRUB ROSES I PLANTED IN SPRING, 1999...

I ordered a good number of roses via mail-order from *Heirloom Old Garden Roses* [St. Paul, OR, (503) 538-1576]. They're small, but I like them that way, as I think they incur less transplanting shock. But I was alarmed when several were missing their leaves, and I wondered whether an insect chewed its way from Oregon to my house. A phone call to *Heirloom* solved my worry, however; turns out that when shipping in Oregon's very wet May, the nursery routinely strips the leaves off the plants so to minimize blackspot and fungus. I was told to proceed with planting, and use Vitamin B₁ to minimize transplant shock.

Where do you get B₁? 'Upstart' by *Ortho* is specifically labeled for it, and several growers, including *Heirloom*, have mentioned using 'SUPERthrive'. The latter has silly "medicine show" advertising which makes me skeptical, but call them at (800) 441-VITA to order some.

I ordered several yellow shrub roses. Since yellow roses (at least the hybrid teas) are notorious deathtraps in Chicago weather, this editor is volunteering to keep you informed about which survive and which perish. Stay tuned! Here's my list (all very fragrant, of course):

Alchemist: Golden yellow touched orange and bronzy foliage. 6-7'. (1956)

Baby Love: Most disease resistant rose. 2" single buttercup flowers. 3-4'. (1992)

Countess Celeste: Coral flowers and very hardy. Continuous. 3'. (1998)

Flutterby: Single deep yellow changes to other colors. Continuous. 5'. (1996)

Goldbusch: Eglanteria hybrid w/ honey-bronze flower clusters. Very hardy. 8' x 5'.

Golden Celebration: David Austin rose, Golden yellow, 4', continuous. (1992)

Gold Moss: Clear yellow, compact 3.5' Moss rose. Clear yellow. Repeat. (1972)

Lemon Delight: 2' Moss rose with lemon yellow flowers. Continuous. (1978)

Magic Carpet: Lavender flowers on a prostrate 18" x 3-4' wide shrub. (1992)

Marinette: Large pink opening to cream flowers. Continuous 5' Austin. (1995)

Mountbatten: Primrose yellow, edged pink, 5' shrub. For hedges or good cut. (1982)

Oranges & Lemons: Orange striped yellow. Mahogany new foliage. 6'. (1993)

Pink Pavement: Groundcover rugosa with coral-salmon flowers. 3'. (1991)

Rosa eglantena: Apple-scented foliage! 6-8'. Prickly.

Rugelda: Hybrid rugosa with yellow edged red blooms. Repeat. 6'. (1989).

full sun and let you know how they fare. In addition, *Magnolia* x 'Butterfly' is settling in in front of a backdrop of white pines. I don't know which is the best yellow magnolia (there are about 10 to choose from), although I recently saw 'Elizabeth' at Longenecker Gardens in Madison, WI, and she is a beauty!

Do you like trees with purple foliage? If so, locate this birch: *Betula platyphylla* 'Crimson Frost'. It is dark purple-green: wow! And since I couldn't find *Halesia monticola* 'Rosea', which several trusted advisors say is the ultimate patio tree, I bought the white version (which is no slaggard either). Come to find out that Rich Eyre (*Rich's Foxwillow Pines Nursery*) stocks the 'Rosea'. Gotta have one!

Do you like lilacs? I love lilacs! And now they come in little sizes. Remember that blue perennial combo of iris, forget me nots, blue violas, and veronica? Put them next to a truly-blue lilac, *Syringa* 'Little Boy Blue', which grows only 3-4' tall and 5-6' wide, and you will fly in your sleep.

By the way, the 1997-98 shrub roses are all doing fine: way better than the dopey butterfly bushes [*Buddleias*], all of which died this winter or are clawing their way back from one measly little sprout. Bah! Only one rose ('Chinatown') didn't make it. So there! Use shrub roses!

By the way, I note in the April 99 newsletter of *The Morton Arboretum* that its "plant of the month" is *Ribes odoratum*, the clove currant. I crave this plant, having seen it flowering yellow en masse at the arboretum. Here's a gripe, however: why recommend a plant that is not for sale any-

where? This seems to happen too often: are the nurseries not reading what the arboreta are writing or is the arboretum/botanical garden staff too used to getting all their plant material wholesale or by donation that they don't remember that most of us buy retail? Either way, both sets of professionals might consider remembering us, the people who are responsible for their livelihoods. G'rrr.

Speaking of *The Morton Arboretum*, I'm eager to meet Dr. Susan Wiegrefe, whose rather unusual title—a true conversation starter at a cocktail party—is "tree breeder". Nonetheless, *TWG* readers will be interested in her work in creating the ultimate Callery

pear [*Pyrus*] tree. She wants to retain their lovely spring flowers but add better fall color and stronger branching. I'll be 70 years old when her seedlings become adults, but I'll let you know the results!

NURSERIES AND OTHER STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW

Do you like oak trees? I mean, do you *really* like oak trees? I do, as is evidenced by the donations we receive from our pals. We've even had pots filled with baby oaks left for adoption outside our door! This week my husband John brought home a bucket-load that our friend and *TWG* subscriber Bill Kapsalis had dug out from his Lake Forest, IL, backyard! Now I have to find some more time and more places to stick them (I've got my eye on the school next door). And I need to figure out how to protect them from ravenous mice and chipmunks, so please write me quick if you know.

If you do love oak trees and want to grow them from acorns, write to *TWG* subscriber and general good guy Guy Sternberg. He has 149 different species of oaks, from which he'll collect the acorns you'd like to grow. In addition, he'll collect the seed from over 150 species of trees for you, at an extremely reasonable price. I love this! Write for a brochure to Guy, who is the co-author with Jim Wilson of the indispensable *Landscaping with Native Trees*, at: *Starhill Forest Arboretum* Seed Program, Route 1, Box 272, Petersburg, IL 62675 or e-mail him at strhlfst@aol.com.

TWG Editor: For a nice accent with roses, or all by themselves, try some...

ROSE-SCENTED PELARGONIUMS

[*P. graveolens*]

by Joe Heidgen

Shady Hill Gardens

Batavia, IL (630) 879-5665

Elburn, IL (630) 365-5665

Red Flowering Rose

True Rose

Old Fashioned Rose

Lady Plymouth

Grey Lady Plymouth

Silver Leaf Rose

Charity

Attar of Roses

Snowflake

Peacock

Dr. Livingston

Candy Dancer

Charmay Snow Flurry

Crowfoot Rose

Rober's Lemon Rose

Round Leaf Rose

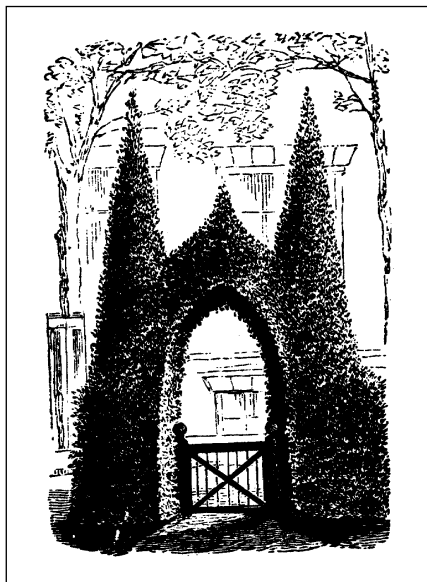
Peppermint Rose

If you appreciate native plants, please join the *IL Native Plant Society* (you don't have to live in IL either). The Society is composed of the most dedicated gardeners, who are devoted to saving our wild flora. The Society has decided, for example, to publish its official list of invasive plant species that are still being sold commercially but which are not recommended for landscaping. It wants the public to know what not to buy or let a landscaper install. This is good news, and if you want to support their effort, become a member by sending \$15 to *INPS*, Forest Glen Preserve, 20301 E. 900 North Road, Westville, IL 61883. By the way, I extend a large invitation to *INPS* to use *The Weedpatch Gazette* to get its word out, just in case I don't complain enough about saving wildflowers and promoting diversity.

I received a lovely note from *TWG* subscriber Liz Dutton, who described her trip to Mequon, WI for the giant (almost too huge) herb sale sponsored by the *WI chapter of the Herb Society of America*. Liz reports that she...

...“made a delightful discovery while in Mequon. One of my favorite hobbies is making dried flower wreaths and swags—it lets me enjoy my flowers during our long winter months. Several months ago I saw, then lost, an ad for a store selling dried flower arrangements in Mequon, so I couldn't remember the store's name. Just by coincidence, the owner, Nino Ridgway, was working at the herb fair and just happened to be the person I unwittingly walked up to and asked if she knew of a dried flower business in town! *Herbs and Everlastings* is located at the *Barthel Fruit Farm*, and it's such a delightful place! Although the dried flowers had all been packed away for the season, I found a great assortment of very well grown herbs at amazingly cheap prices. This is definitely worth a

scenic drive in the country! I intend to go back to pick fruit from their trees and see the dried flower barn later this year. By the way, Nino's hired help was friendly, helpful, funny, and willing to share their knowledge and recipes, too!”. Thanks, Liz! [*Herbs and Everlastings* is located at the *Barthel Fruit Farm*, 12246 N. Farmdale Rd 99W, Mequon, WI 53097-2609. (414) 242-3866].



I welcome new advertiser, *Mourning Dove Farms*, located near Champaign, IL. Owner Josh Schneider says that his very best customers told him about *TWG*, including one subscriber that picked up her first copy at the Seattle Flower Show! Phew-ee, ain't *that* grand? Anyway, Josh claims he loves to stock “the cool stuff”, much collected on trips to England and other world hotspots. He's promised to organize a plant list sooner than later for posting on *weedpatch.com*, so that we can check out his stuff, so to speak. [One week later, I met a gardener who lives in Champaign at a party, and she said that *everyone but everyone* there is talking about *Mourning Dove Farms*.]

Another interesting store is just across from my husband John's office build-

ing in Chicago. *Mad Parade* is in an industrial loft and is full of stylish antique furnishings and garden accessories. Pretty funky! And good prices for being in swanky-land. Owners Jan and Scott Filar are delightful, and deserted my favorite antique shopping town of Hebron, IL for life in the big city. Check them out at 1020 W. Adams, Chicago, IL (312) 738-2680. Then go over to 1021 W. Adams and tell my husband what a peach he is.

TWG reader, Jeanne Valencia of Chicago, called the other day and encouraged me to feature gardening for disabled gardeners, which *TWG* subscriber Shirley Ryan has also urged. Look for that idea to surface in a future issue, and look for a new novel recommended by Jeanne: *Night Gardening* by E.L. Swann, which comes with a packet of seeds! Cute.

How wonderful! The Field Museum has opened “Underground Adventure”, the most expensive (\$12 million!) permanent exhibit in the museum's history. It's dedicated to the life within a cubic foot of prairie soil! The clever scientists (exhibitionists?) have created 15,000 sq. ft. of roots, fungus, tunnels and chambers, even the wafting scent of worms! Call (312) 922-9410 for more information.



Two plant names submitted by two different nurseries for the Plant Catalog on *weedpatch.com*:
Tradescantia ‘Bilberry Ice’
Tradescantia ‘Bill Berry Eyes’

Will the real Spiderwort please identify itself?