

TRANQUIL TIMES

The Newsletter of Tranquil Lake Nursery

No. 29

Spring, 2008

Spring Events & Lectures at Tranquil Lake Nursery

Free and open to the public. For more information, call 508-252-4002 or visit www.tranquil-lake.com

Spring Garden Festival Saturday, April 26, 2008 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A fun and educational day filled with workshops and hands-on demonstrations that will help you to hone your gardening skills and improve the beauty of your landscape. (see details on page 3)

Garden Lectures on Saturdays in May

11 a.m. Bring a Lawn Chair

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| May 3 | What's New in Perennials |
| May 10 | Plants That Defy Drought in the Container or in the Border |
| May 17 | Foliage Plants with Color, Texture and a Long Season of Interest |
| May 24 | Plant Combinations for a Long Season of Bloom |
| May 31 | Success in the Shade |

17th Annual Open House & Summer Garden Festival

Saturday, July 19, 2008
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free and Open to the Public
(See details on page 3)

March Madness & Flower Shows

March Madness, a sports term to define collegiate basketball playoffs, is an apt alliteration befitting gardeners and their state of mind. March, marking the transition from winter to spring, can be the cruelest month for gardeners. Unending days of snow, sleet, rain and mud are interspersed with a few delightful warm days. But the ground is too cold and wet to work. The freezing nights mean it is also too early to plant. The **witchhazels** (*Hamamelis*) stand up to this chaotic weather, unfurling golden petals on warm days and then recoiling against the cold. March Madness, eased by bright bursts of color. March Madness, what if it is weren't for witchhazels? What if it weren't for Flower Shows!

March is the time for flower shows, in particular the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's presentation of The New England Spring Flower Show in Boston. They tease us with fantastic flower arrangements, vibrant colors, lush greenery, garden vignettes flirting June flowers. The flower show's horticultural exuberance energizes gardeners like the witchhazel flowers reawakened with warmth.

I still have vivid memories of my first New England Spring Flower Show experience thirty three years ago while still a student of horticulture at the University of Maine. It now seems surreal that I might be part of other people's budding florescence memories.

Tranquil Lake Nursery exhibited a garden in the Flower Show for the first time twenty years ago. Beginner's luck bestowed a gold medal, the Trustee's Trophy, the first awarding of the Ruth Thayer Prize and best of all a fortuitous introduction to the Horticultural Society's Children's Coordinator, Debi Hogan at the Preview Party. March Madness!

Tranquil Lake Nursery, Debi and I have been engaged in flower shows ever since. Visitors to the nursery who encounter purple columns in one of our display gardens may recall them topped with cascading water in the 2000 New England Spring Flower Show. Followers of the Miniature Garden category may become as intrigued as Debi and I have. Within a scale of one inch equaling one foot, we have made landscapes suggestive of those built in – 16th-Century China, and by garden designers Fletcher Steele and Roberto Burle Marx.

To celebrate the twenty year anniversary of our first flower show experience and confirm a sure sign of madness, considering the current cost of greenhouse fuels, we exhibited a drought defying garden of silver and gray foliage perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees this year. Silky hairs and waxy cuticles burnish some leaves to a silver chrome. More than ornamental, this characteristic developed as a plants defense to cut water loss from their leaf surfaces.

Drought tolerance is an essential quality for plants in the gardens at Tranquil Lake Nursery, as we have light sandy soils. The Silver Garden at the nursery is designed around a curved stone seat that encircles a dragonfly mosaic. This garden is a collection of hardy and tropical plants, from a dwarf Colorado blue spruce and Australian eucalyptus to rock hardy rosemary willow (*Salix elaeagnus*) a mimic for the Mediterranean rosemary.

Explore our drought tolerant display gardens for planting design ideas from small city plots or country estates. Join the madness and plant witchhazels.

Warren Leach

Tough & Hardy Garden Plants

Woody Trees & Shrubs

Acanthopanax sieboldianus
‘Variegatus’
Acer negundo ‘Flamingo’
Aronia arbutifolia
Cornus sericea ‘Silver & Gold’
Cotinus coggygia ‘Royal Purple’
Cotinus coggygia ‘Golden Spirit’
Cotinus ‘Grace’
Fothergilla ‘Blue Shadow’
Hydrangea arborescens ‘Annabelle’
Physocarpus opulifolius ‘Diablo’
Rhus typhina ‘Tiger Eyes’
Rosa glauca
Salix elaeagnos
Spiraea japonica ‘Gold Mound’
Spiraea thunbergii ‘Ogon’
Thuja occidentalis ‘Rheingold’
Weigela ‘Wine & Roses’

Perennials

Amsonia tabernaemontana
Baptisia australis
Cimicifuga ramosa ‘Brunette’
Coreopsis cultivars
Echinacea cultivars
Epimedium cultivars
Geranium ‘Rozanne’
Heuchera cultivars
Hemerocallis cultivars
Hosta cultivars
Iris sibirica
Patrinia scabiosifolia
Rudbeckia cultivars
Salvia cultivars
Sedum cultivars

Grasses

Calamagrostis x ‘Karl Foerster’
Miscanthus sinensis ‘Morning Light’
Miscanthus sinensis ‘Strictus’
Molinia caerulea ‘Variegata’
Panicum virgatum ‘Dallas Blues’

Creating Reliable and Practical Gardens

Our gardens are oases, both figuratively and literally. They provide a place to escape, relax, entertain, and especially cultivate and grow life sustaining plants. A well planted garden can offer colorful blooms from late winter witchhazels to late fall asters. Evergreen leaves, vibrant fruit, multi-colored twigs, exfoliating bark and fall foliage clothe the garden and offer shade and structure to the garden guest.

We want our gardens to succeed in providing multiple seasons of beauty. To be successful, the gardener needs more than plant lists annotated with flower colors and bloom season. One should pay heed to the site and gain an understanding of a sense of place. This site sensitivity is crucial both to design themes and the practical cultivation of plants. Such an examination of cultural environments was addressed by Landscape Architect **Fletcher Steele** in his book *Gardens and People*, published in 1964. “Every spot in the world has its own individual character, topography, and climate -- its Genius Loci. The landscape architect learns early to consult her, because she is pitiless in branding unfit all that goes against her grain ... Her attitude does not change in cities or in forest. Each different site must be separately studied first-hand, on pain of ending with a theater set instead of a fitting work of art.”

Consulting the Genius Loci is a sound principle and is universal in garden making from the masterpieces of 16th century Italy to ancient China and contemporary Japan. Capturing this sense of place and time is one fundamental that **Claire Sawyers** explores in her new book, *The Authentic Garden*. She describes in one example the ephemeral qualities and gaiety of cherry blossoms in Japan. When confronted with the question as to whether extensive plant breeding could create possible new varieties that would greatly extend the bloom season, she cites that the celebration of the cherry blossoms is made all the more precious because of their fleeting beauty. This is an example of a culture where perpetual bloom would become mundane and not as worthy of a celebration. Any gardener who is devoted to growing a lilac, and who could not bear to not breath in its sweet intoxication, for however briefly in May, understands.

We endeavor to heed the tenets of the Genius Loci at Tranquil Lake Nursery. The display gardens offer fanciful, colorful and contemplative oases incorporating time-tested hardy plants. The gardens at the nursery celebrate the structure of design, as well as the most ephemeral flower, the daylily. This revelry is on-going throughout the summer, climaxing in July, it continues as flowers open anew day after day.

Understanding the site involves more than one component, so too understanding hardiness is much more than a record of the extreme low winter temperature. Exposure to the sun and wind, the contour of the land, soil texture and soil structure are site conditions that greatly impact hardiness. Winter wet and heavy clay soils, not extreme cold, will kill Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*). It thrives in the well drained sandy soils of our display gardens, even when the thermometer has registered ten below zero!

Selecting plants that will flourish in your environment is a practical first step. One of the most common garden questions we hear each summer is “Why don’t my hydrangeas bloom?” Almost invariably it turns out the hydrangea they are referring to is the ‘blue’ hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*). The two-fold answer relates to pruning with regard to flower buds set on new or old wood or outright winter hardiness. In our cold pocket at Tranquil Lake Nursery, even *Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Endless Summer’ is a poor performer. The native *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’ which blooms on new growth with huge clouds of billowy white flowers is a reliable performer from Massachusetts to

Bangor, Maine. Equally hardy are the *Hydrangea paniculata* cultivars. I am especially fond of *Hydrangea* 'Tardiva' with attractive flowers lasting through October when they become tinged pink.

Choosing plants that are resilient to the vagaries of climate change is becoming a concern to many gardeners. The erratic temperature fluctuations like those experienced in the winter of 2006-07 and last summer's uneven rainfall and drought which prolonged into the fall are increasingly raising havoc. Enriching our soils with organic composts and amendments does help buffer climate change, but good plant selection is essential.

Some plants like red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) variegated five leafed arailia (*Acanthopanax sieboldianus* 'Variegatus') and ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) and its cultivars thrive in extreme opposing conditions, sun or shade, damp or drought. They offer opportunities for valuable planting combinations, together and with sun loving daylilies, patrinia and baptisia or in the shade with hosta, carex and rodgersia.

The display gardens at Tranquil Lake Nursery rely on tough plants that will thrive in our light sandy soil and perennial bouts of drought. Explore the gravel garden and plant alternatives to lawns. The chartreuse foliage of *Sedum* 'Angelina' and *Rhus typhina* 'Tiger Eyes' are luxuriant in the worst dry spell.

Listen to the site, consult the Genius Loci and remember to celebrate trifles in the garden, even if they only bloom for a short time.

Warren Leach

Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant of the Year for 2008 is Geranium 'Rozanne'. This lovely geranium sports large deep blue flowers from June to October and grows 18" tall and 24" wide. This long-blooming geraniums is quite hardy and prefers well-drained soil. Making a great ground cover for the mixed border, it is an indispensable addition to the full sun border



Open House & Summer Garden Festival

Tranquil Lake Nursery's 17th Annual Open House & Summer Garden Festival is scheduled for **Saturday, July 19** from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Festival is free and open to the public. The day will be filled with workshops on daylilies, perennials, herbs, cooking with daylilies and more. Our 10 acres of daylilies will be at peak bloom. Mark your calendars now and join us for this fun filled day.

Claire Sawyers is our special guest speaker. She is the author of *The Authentic Garden, Five Principles for Cultivating a Sense of Place*. Drawing on her knowledge of a vast array of American and foreign gardens, she identifies five principles that help instill a sense of authenticity. Practical and inspiring, *The Authentic Garden* enables the reader to make a garden that is true to a specific time, place, and culture; to capture and reflect an authentic spirit so that the garden, in turn, will nurture the spirit of those who cherish and dwell in it.

Claire Sawyers has been director of the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College since 1990, bringing both U.S. and international perspectives to her work. She grew up on a dairy farm in Missouri and spent six years of her youth in Japan, to which she returned to work with Japanese landscapers while pursuing her undergraduate degree in ornamental horticulture at Purdue University. In addition to working in Belgium (Kalmthout Arboretum) and France (private gardens in Brittany and Normandy), Sawyers holds a master's degree in horticulture from Purdue.

Spring Garden Festival

Saturday, April 26

10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Workshop & Demonstrations

- 10:00 Getting the Garden Ready for Spring Planting: Preparing the Border and the Soil
Warren Leach
- 10:30 Planting and Designing the Mixed Border
Warren Leach
- 11:00 Hardy Prize Winning Plants for Your Garden
Deborah Swanson
- 12:00 Cutting Back, Spring Pruning and Coppicing Your Trees and Shrubs
Warren Leach
- 12:30 Wattling and Weaving Garden Fences and Structures
Gilbert Moore
- 1:00 June Blooming Siberian Iris, Daylilies & Their Companions
Philip Boucher
- 1:30 Herbs for Fragrance, Tasting & Garden Ornamentation
Debi Hogan
- 2:00 Creating Container Gardens Filled with Shrubs, Perennials, Herbs & More
Warren Leach
- 2:30 Arranging with Spring Flowers & Foliage, Japanese Style
Gilbert Moore
- 3:00 Soil Preparation Essentials and Water Conservation Minded Garden Techniques
Philip Boucher

The Spring Garden Festival is free and open to the public. Bring a picnic lunch and plan to spend the whole day wandering in the many gardens and learning new techniques that will keep your garden in glorious bloom all summer long and into the fall. We'll provide cold drinks. For more information call 508-252-4002 or visit www.tranquil-lake.com.

Visit our Website

We invite you to visit the Tranquil Lake Nursery website for a full listing of the Siberian Iris, Japanese Iris and Daylilies that are available this year. Each iris and daylily variety is accompanied by a description of the flower and the height and characteristics of the plant. A picture of the flower is also provided for most varieties.

With so many daylilies to choose from, we have also provided separate lists of daylilies by characteristics. You can choose by size of flower, color, height, shape or season of bloom and search a list specific to that characteristic. We also have lists for nocturnal bloomers, fragrant daylilies, and daylilies that rebloom.

The website also provides copies of all of the plant articles from our past newsletters, garden lectures, events and more. Check out the website at www.tranquil-lake.com.

A Bright Late-Summer Accent Collection

A dramatic way to finish the summer with this colorful flourish to herald the warmth of the autumn ahead.

One each of Autumn Blaze; Chicago Rosy; Ethel Shepherd, Hot Town; Tetrina's Daughter; and Yellow Pinwheel. An \$89 value. 6 plants for \$76 .

(add shipping charge if you are not picking up at nursery)

Display Gardens at Tranquil

Visit Tranquil Lake and wander through our ever-increasing display gardens. The silver garden, which was added in the fall of 2005, is really maturing beautifully and last-years drip-water garden garners lots of attention.

Visiting the Nursery

Tranquil Lake Nursery is open 7 days a week from 10 a.m. to 5. p.m. From mid-April through mid-October. The nursery is closed on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day.

Directions: Tranquil Lake Nursery is located just north of Route 44 in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, about 8 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. If you are traveling **east on Route 44**, take a left turn onto River Street immediately after you pass Winthrop Commons and the Route 44 Recreation Center. Continue on River Street across Broad Street. The nursery is the fourth driveway on the right. If you are traveling **west on Route 44**, travel 1.4 miles past the intersection of Route 118 and Route 44. You will pass the Rehoboth Schools on the right. Make the next right and turn onto Danforth Street. Take the first left from Danforth Street onto River Street. Tranquil Lake Nursery is the fourth driveway on the left.

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