

## WHITEHOUSE PERENNIALS NEWSLETTER - Late Summer

If you are planning to add a grass to your garden this fall don't delay planting it. The showiest of the grasses are warm season growers and do not establish well if they are planted too late in the fall. They are just starting to come into bloom at the nursery so now is the ideal time to make a selection. The grasses are also part of our end of summer sale.



*Miscanthus 'Huron Sunrise'*

### DYCS

Among gardeners who hate yellow these cheerful summer bloomers are known as #@!!!DYCs.- translation Darn Yellow Composites. I can't deny these daisy like flowers are yellow, they are common and they do seem to be everywhere but it is hard to beat them for colour when the rest of the perennials are starting to wane. They often flower until hard frost, giving you something to pick for the Thanksgiving dinner table.

A composite flower is a flower head made up of two types of florets. The small inner florets are actually a complete flower that is fertile and produces seed. The ray florets that are long and strap like only serve to attract pollinators. This flower structure

is characteristic of the Asteraceae family, which was formerly known as Compositae-hence the name DYCs. All of the DYCs are attractive to bees and butterflies and many of them produce seeds which provide food for birds. They are also excellent long lasting cut flowers.

Helenium, Helianthus, Heliopsis, Coreopsis and Rudbeckia are the most common of the DYC's. They all thrive in full to part sun in well-drained soil of average fertility. Regular deadheading will prolong the bloom period and keep the plants looking neat. Many are also prolific self-seeders and can become a nuisance in the cultivated border. In a wild flower garden this might be a positive trait. To maintain the vigour of the clumps they should be divided every three years.

Heleniums offer the greatest range of colours with red, orange and rust being as common as the yellow forms. They are very upright and seldom need staking or pinching. Heliopsis varieties are the typical yellow but do come in single and double forms. 'Summer Nights' is a selected form that has a very dark stem and a brown center providing a nice colour contrast.

Helianthus are often considered to be just annuals because of our familiarity with Helianthus annuum or sunflowers. However there are some lovely perennial forms that are excellent additions to the late summer garden. In the summer 07 newsletter I profiled Helianthus 'Lemon Queen', a beautiful soft primrose yellow charmer. (All previous newsletters are archived on our website.) Helianthus flore pleno is another great addition with large deep yellow flowers that are fully double and look like dahlias in flower form.

Coreopsis, a North American native, is also a familiar and popular perennial. The thread leaf forms, (verticillata) have fine textured needle like foliage. Coreopsis 'Zagbred' and 'Golden Gain' are the most compact golden flowered forms while 'Golden Showers' can reach closer to 60 cm. The

very beautiful 'Moonbeam' is a soft primrose yellow. It is not as tolerant of winter wet as the other forms and also appreciates a good mulch. The newer coloured forms, which include 'Limerock Ruby' and 'Limerock Passion' are non stop bloomers for summer containers or borders but will not winter in our zone.



*Rudbeckia 'Henry Eilers'*

Coreopsis tripteris is the giant of the coreopsis group topping out at 180cm in our main perennial garden. Finches particularly appreciate its seeds so it should not be cut back in the fall.

Rudbeckias are also stellar late summer bloomers. In this group of North American natives are annuals, biennials and perennials. The most familiar is Rudbeckia fuldiga or Black Eyed Susan. 'Goldstrum', a selected form has large flowers with golden yellow ray florets and large dark brown disk florets. 'Henry Eilers' is a native plant that is more tolerant of shade than many of the other varieties. For those gardeners with neighbours they don't like or an outhouse to cover Rudbeckia laciniata 'Golden Glow' is an excellent choice. It is a king size plant with a reputation as a real thug so don't plant it where it can invade less robust neighbours.



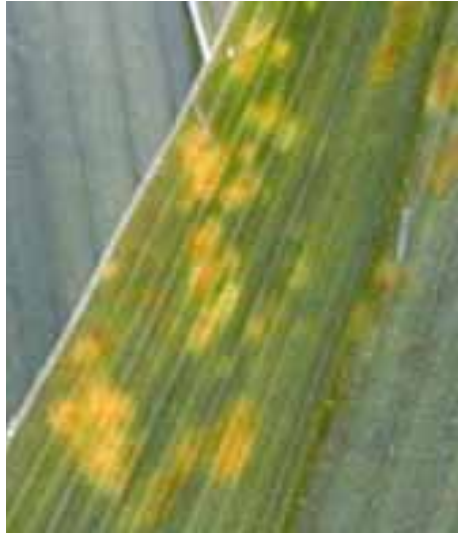
Aster 'October Skies'

If you cannot bear the thought of one more yellow flower consider adding a fall aster to your border. Asters are far hardier than mums and bloom well into the fall. The colour range includes whites, purples, blues and many shades of pink. There is also lots of choice in heights from dwarf varieties to specimens suitable for the back of the border.

### LEAF STREAK

Over the years I have had many questions about the ugly browning on the leaves of daylilies. The fungus that causes this affliction is *Aureobasidium microstictum*. It can certainly make a clump of daylilies look unattractive. This year we noticed far less streaking on all of our daylilies. When I looked into the management of leaf streak I discovered that cutting down and removing all foliage in the fall reduces the population of spores that overwinter on the decaying foliage. Transmission of the fungus happens when the new foliage emerges in the spring through the old infected foliage. The disease is also spread by water splashing the spores up onto the leaves from adjacent infected plants and even by gardeners who move among the foliage when it is wet. Last fall, for the first time, we removed all daylily foliage right to the ground and spread a heavy mulch of straw or hay. The mulch reduced the bouncing of water from the soil onto the foliage. I would recommend another choice of mulching material because the straw also produced an abundant crop of weeds. These two changes in our cultural practices have greatly reduced

out leaf streak problems in a summer where the excessive rain should have made leaf streak worse than normal.



Leaf Streak on a Daylily Leaf

Other recommendations include regular division to minimize overcrowding and the resultant slow drying of the foliage. It is also suggested that overhead watering be avoided. Someone forgot to tell Mother Nature about that this summer. It is also worth noting that the foliage on some varieties seems far less affected by leaf streak. If leaf streak is an ongoing problem in your garden select cultivars for the quality of the foliage as well as the beauty of the flower.

### EARWIGS

I was complaining to John Valleau, the resident horticulturalist at Valleybrook gardens about earwigs eating my plants. He suggested I try his foolproof earwig trap. Sink small custard cups, tuna fish cans or other small containers in the soil at ground level. Fill the containers with half an inch of soy sauce topped off with a light slick of oil. He assured me that earwigs are not discerning about the taste of the soy sauce so the cheaper the better. I was a little dubious about this formulation but I tried it and was amazed to find my test cup filled with earwigs the next morning. The traps can be left until they are filled with bodies. If you have raccoons that snack on the bait, or the thought of emptying the

traps disgusts you an effective trap can be made by filling the cardboard center of a paper towel roll with drinking straws and taping one end shut. The earwigs will crawl into the straws where they will be trapped.

John cautioned that it is important to determine that earwigs are the culprits because, despite their ugly appearance, they are beneficial in the garden consuming slug eggs and decaying plant material. He also suggested the earlier you start your trapping program the more effective it will be. The mother earwig lays her eggs early in the spring and tends the babies until their first molt. If you begin trapping early enough you can capture the mother and reduce the population substantially.



Vernonia (New York Iron Weed) a gorgeous late summer bloomer

