

WHITEHOUSE PERENNIALS NEWSLETTER - Spring 2008

GOING BANANAS

Daylily enthusiasts are always looking for varieties that have both abundant bloom and an extended bloom period. 'Stella D' Oro', the first true repeat bloomer, is a great performer but the strong golden yellow bloom makes it more difficult to use in a pastel colour scheme and the flower is small. Last year I recommended 'Apricot Sparkles' because it provided a different colour choice and loads of repeat bloom. We also planted other varieties in our test gardens and were really impressed with a new daylily from Walters Gardens called 'Going Bananas'. It has the same soft lemon yellow of 'Happy Returns', one of its parents, but the flowers are much bigger. They are a full 10 cms (4 inches) across with beautiful form and fragrance.



The bigger bloom and lovely flower form comes from the other parent 'Brocade Gown', a gorgeous daylily

in its own right. The plant habit is very compact, reaching a height of about 50 cms (20") and has strong three way branching and ten to fifteen buds per scape. It will bloom right up to frost providing continuous colour for many weeks. What more could you want in a daylily?

"MOLLY THE WITCH"

About ten years ago one of my customers gave me a tiny peony seedling that he had grown. He identified it as mlokosewitschii, a plant I had never heard of and certainly could not pronounce. I planted it in the perennial border where it rapidly disappeared under its more aggressive neighbours. Several years later, while doing my spring clean up, I noticed burgundy stems and blue green foliage edged with burgundy just emerging and I remembered my gift. I cleared the competition away and watched it grow into a lovely clump. When it unfurled its beautiful glowing yellow cup-shaped flowers for the first time I understood what a treasure I had been given. This plant goes by a number of names, "Molly the Witch", mloko or the Golden Peony, but whatever its name, it is a traffic stopper in every stage of its growth. It is a native of the Caucasus Mountains, and the only true yellow among the herbaceous peony species. It is also one of the first to bloom in our garden, several weeks ahead of the other peonies. From the unfurling leaves through bud to bloom and seed pods, this peony is always attractive. I grow it in full sun but it is also adaptable to half-

day light. Visitors to the garden have often asked to purchase a plant but it has been very hard to find a source for it. This year I am delighted that I finally have some six-year-old roots of this very special peony for sale.



Paeonia mlokosewitschii

MAKE YOUR GARDEN A HUMMINGBIRD HAVEN

Few birds are as universally recognized and admired as hummingbirds. We love to watch these tiny birds zoom around collecting nectar from the brightly coloured flowers in the garden. If you happen to be wearing red you may even find yourself being dive-bombed. These tiny dynamos have a very high metabolism and need to feed constantly. While they are feeding they stick their heads inside the flowers and get covered with pollen which they transfer to other flowers, an additional benefit of their presence in the garden. Hummingbirds seem to have good taste in plants preferring to dine on the showiest annuals, perennials and vines. Among their favourite

nectar sources is Monarda, commonly known as Beebalm. Because of the brilliant colours and masses of tubular-shaped blooms, it is the perfect hummingbird plant.



Monarda 'Grand Marshall'

The newest varieties of Monarda, some developed at the Morden Research Station in Manitoba, are improvements on older selections. They are far more compact, less invasive and more resistant to powdery mildew. Look for 'On Parade', 'Grand Marshall', and for taller plants 'Dark Ponticum' and 'Jacob Kline'. For smaller gardens or as edging in larger plantings choose 'Petite Delight' and 'Petite Wonder', both of which are just 45 centimetres tall. Agastache, Hostas, Lupins, Columbines, Heucheras and Hollyhocks are also favourite hummer food. As a bonus most plants that interest hummingbirds are also equally attractive to butterflies and bees. Grouping these plants together is especially effective because hummingbirds find their food by sight and a massed planting of favourite food sources is

guaranteed to catch their attention and even encourage them to nest in your yard. It is important to select plants with a view to having sources of food available throughout the entire season. Early flowering shrubs like Weigela and Rhododendrons can provide food before the later blooming perennials start to flower. Annuals such as Fuchsia, Salvia and Nicotiana are also good choices as are some of the flowering vines. Campsis (Trumpet Vine) and Lonicera (Honeysuckle) are both hummingbird magnets. When creating a welcoming habit for hummingbirds please remember to provide a source of fresh water for bathing and drinking.

ANNUAL VINES - FAST GROWING BEAUTIES

Although we specialize in perennials I can't resist branching out a little into some of the more unusual and hard to find annuals as well. Two years ago I was looking for something to plant in a large pot and train up a obelisk. One of my suppliers gave me a plant of Cobaea scandens, (Cup and Saucer Vine) to try. It was not until late in June that I remembered this plant, by now languishing in the greenhouse neglected and dried out. I planted it anyway and what a show. By late summer it had reached the upper deck on the house and was covered with huge fragrant "cup and saucer" flowers in purple with green calyxes. Most annual vines make very rapid growth because they have to flower and set seed in one season. For this reason they make great cover ups for new arbours and trellises while you wait for slower growing perennial vines to establish.



Cobaea scandens

They can also be used to scramble over unsightly spots in the garden, like wire fences, or add another layer of colour in large containers as I first did with the Cup and Saucer Vine. Other excellent choices include Lablab purpureus, (Hyacinth Bean), with its clusters of rosy purple flowers, Rhodochiton atrosanguineus (Purple Bell Vine), with dark maroon bells, and Morning Glories. We will have a good selection of these interesting vines at "Ottawa Blooms" as well as some other tender perennials and special plants for containers.

SEE YOU AT
OTTAWA BLOOMS

*"Gardening is the purest of
human pleasures"*

Francis Bacon
