

WHITEHOUSE PERENNIALS

NEWSLETTER - EARLY SUMMER

By Suzanne Patry and Bruce Trites

AMERICAN HEMEROCALLIS SOCIETY ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS.

The American Hemerocallis Society has just announced the names of the two daylilies that have received the most coveted awards granted by the society. The selection of these daylilies is done with input from all across North America and is a tremendous honour for a hybridizer. The Stout Medal, the highest award of the society has been given to 'Fooled Me', a daylily registered in 1990. The Lenington All-American Award recognizes an exceptional daylily that performs well in all parts of North America. The winner this year is 'Mary's Gold', an oldie that was registered in 1984. We have grown both daylilies for a number of years and think they are both exceptional so we are delighted with these selections. 'Mary's Gold' was one of eight seedlings that resulted from a cross of a bright yellow daylily with a pink polychrome flower. You never know what to expect when crosses are made and 'Mary's Gold' illustrates this. It turned out to be a vivid deep gold accented with black stamens. The huge 15cm blooms are produced on tall well-branched scapes. The foliage is lush and healthy and the general plant habit is exceptional. When it is in bloom every visitor to the garden admires its vibrant colour.

'Fooled Me' is an outrageously bright daylily with a yellow gold flower accented by a brilliant red center. The hybridizer thought it was too gaudy to sell but was reminded by a colleague that gaudy sells. The plant is very vigorous with great branching and plant habit. You can certainly see it from across the garden. Both daylilies would look terrific in a collection of hot coloured daylilies or when combined in a mixed perennial planting that features lots of vivid colours. Come and see them in bloom in mid July to appreciate what exceptional plants they are.



Mary's Gold



Fooled Me

ALFALFA AND TRIACONTANOL AS A PLANT STIMULANT

Many years ago, on a garden tour, I visited Van Wade's wonderful hosta garden in Bellville, Ohio. I had never seen such beautiful hostas and I asked how he grew them so big and lush. He told me the secret was alfalfa pellets and compost. He explained that for more than fifty years alfalfa had been used as a plant stimulant. The chemical responsible for this action is triacontanol which occurs widely in nature as a waxy coating on many plants and as a major component of beeswax. Triacontanol has been called the most potent growth hormone ever used on plants.

He suggested that I add two to three cupfuls of alfalfa pellets to every square metre of gardening soil or use the meal as a top dressing around established plants. We have been doing that ever since and have been really pleased with the rapid growth of the hostas. Now, when we prepare a bed we incorporate at least twenty percent compost as well as the addition of a generous handful of alfalfa pellets to every planting hole.

We have found that this method works equally well with all plants and now do this on all of our garden plantings. We have never used any fertilizers or supplements on our beds other than the compost and pellets. Our soil is loose and friable and the earthworms are the size of small snakes.

Last year, at the request of customers, we started to sell our compost mixed with alfalfa by the bag. The compost is free of weed seeds and is an excellent mulch or planting additive. We have it available for \$4.50 a bag at the nursery.

BOLD PLANTS FOR SHADE

Creating a tropical feel in a shade garden can be easily achieved by including some big and bold shade plants in your garden design. Many gardeners think first of the large leaved hostas but there are other choices that combine well with hostas and add different shapes, colours and textures to the design. Many gardeners are also looking for plants that will grow well around a pond as more and more designs include some kind of water feature. *Darmera peltata*, (formerly known as *Peltiphyllum peltatum*) is one of those perfect plants. Sometimes called the poor man's Gunnera, this plant forms lush clumps of round scalloped leaves that can reach 45cm (15") across. The plant stands about 80cm tall in the moist corner of our sunny garden but will grow much taller in more shade. In the spring long bristly flower stalks emerge from the bare ground looking much like *Bergenia* flowers. It is a very trouble free and easy care plant that will be quite happy growing in rich peaty soil at the edge of a water garden or in a boggy site. Even in the regular soil of the hosta garden it will perform well as long as there is adequate moisture to support the heavy canopy of leaves.

The many varieties of *Ligularia* are also dramatic additions to the shady garden. Native to China, they prefer rich and damp soil in dappled or light shade. When the leaves are exposed to full sun they immediately droop and look unattractive. One of the most popular of the *ligularias* 'Britt Marie Crawford' has very dark burgundy leaves. 'Desdemona' and 'Othello' also feature rich deep green leaves with burgundy undersides and stems. The dense short spikes of daisy shaped blooms are bright orange or yellow. 'The Rocket' is another worthwhile variety with dark green deeply incised leaves and bold yellow flowers on wiry black stems.



Ligularia Britt Marie Crawford

EXTEND THE BLOOM TIME OF PHLOX

Phlox paniculata, commonly known as Summer Phlox is a beautiful addition to the sunny border. Phlox come in a profusion of colours, heights and bloom times with the first varieties starting to bloom in mid July. New for 2007 are varieties that will bloom from the top of the stem as regular phlox do but also will also produce lateral shoots along the stems producing many more flowers than our current varieties. Watch for those in our 2007 catalogue. By pinching off the outer stems of a clump of phlox you can stimulate the phlox to behave like these new varieties and extend the length of bloom time by several weeks. The stems that you have pinched back on the outside of the clump will bloom later than the center of the clump producing a much longer period of bloom. Simply pinch out the growing shoot of each stem that you want to treat and leave it to produce lateral branches. You will be surprised at how much longer your phlox will be in bloom.



Phlox paniculata

SEMPERVIVUMS ARE THE NEW COLLECTABLES

As avid gardeners fill up their available space we turn to smaller plants that grow well in containers and troughs or can be tucked into small spaces. Sempervivums, commonly known as houseleeks or hens and chicks are the perfect plants. In Europe they were known as the houseleek because homeowners grew them on thatched roofs to ward off fire and lightning. Sempervivum means "live forever" which tells us how easy they are to grow and propagate. As a child I loved these spiny little plants and delighted in pulling off the chicks and planting them to produce a new colony. They are easy care plants that will grow even in very poor soil as long as they are not wet or in deep shade. The interest in collecting them has produced hundreds of varieties with interesting colour patterns and shapes. Colours range from green to red, pink, grey and yellow. Some are covered with white hairs that look like cobwebs and are known as arachnoideum types. Despite their delicate appearance they are guaranteed to grow rapidly and make a wonderful edge or groundcover.



Semps

PLANTING BAREROOT DAYLILIES

One of the great things about daylilies is the ease with which they can be divided and transplanted at any time of year. To help your new divisions establish quickly follow these simple steps.

1. Cut the foliage back to about 15-20cms. It is also best to cut off the blooms scapes to allow the plant to use all of its energy making new roots.
2. Soak the roots for a couple of hours in a bucket of water to ensure they are well hydrated.
3. If it will be a few days before you are able to plant the divisions, after soaking, heel them in by digging a trench, laying the plants in and covering the roots with soil. You can also wrap the roots in damp newspaper and leave the root ball in the plastic bag in a shady location.
4. To plant the daylily dig a large hole and mix in some compost. Make a mound in the center of the hole and place the daylily on the mound spreading out the roots evenly around the mound. Refill the hole and mulch around the daylily.
5. Make sure you plant the daylily at the same depth it was growing. You can see the marking on the plant where the soil line was. If planted too deeply daylilies can rot or take longer to establish. If planting is too shallow they are susceptible to winter heaving.
6. Water regularly until the plants are well-established and producing lots of fresh new growth.

