

TRANQUIL TIMES

The Newsletter of Tranquil Lake Nursery

No. 33

Spring, 2010

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, May 1, 2010 10 a.m. to 4:00 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 & June

11 a.m. Bring a Lawn Chair

- May 8 What's New In The Garden:
Perennials & More
- May 15 Plants That Will Defy
Drought - In the Sun Or In
The Shade
- May 22 Foliage Plants With Color,
Texture And A Long Season
Of Interest
- May 29 The Colorful World Of
Hydrangea - Joan Harrison
(See details on Page 3)
- June 6 Unusual Tropical Plants For
Containers

(Descriptions of all garden talks are on our website at www.tranquil-lake.com)

19th Annual Open House & Summer Garden Festival

Saturday, July 17, 2010
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free and Open to the Public.

Spring Spree

It is finally Spring, and at Tranquil Lake Nursery we have many exciting new plants for you to peruse. They include native as well as exotic, and both herbaceous and woody plants that have proven their merit, in some instances despite their lack of garden familiarity. Few are brand new hybrids, or extravagantly promoted trade-marked brands grown in oddly colored containers. To the contrary, I am most ecstatic this year about a native scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) whose absence in ornamental horticultural references just adds additional curiosity to its enchanting value in the garden.

This diminutive oak is a natural bonsai, as compared to its esteemed clan of majestic titans. *Quercus ilicifolia* or **Bear Oak** grows a mere six-to-ten feet in height, sporting tiny, lobed leaves that turn burgundy red in the fall. The leaf resembles that of a holly (Ilex), hence its specific botanical name *ilicifolia* which translates as holly leaf. Its common name refers to the bitter acorns that are apparently palatable to bears. Don't worry, you will not need bear repellent.

Bear oak's native habitat ranges from coastal Maine to the shores of New Jersey and west to the mountains of West Virginia. It grows in poor, rocky and sandy soils. I first found bear oak growing out of cracks and crevices in granite ledges and vertical cliffs on Mount Champlain's Precipice Cliff Trail in Acadia National Park. An easier study, at sea level, can be found at the Cape Cod National Sea Shore in North Truro. Whether your garden emulates mountain heights or coastal flats this dwarf oak lends its beautiful form as a garden focal point, on par with the Japanese maple. Bear oak can make a unique low hedge or background to a border. Underplant it with **low bush blueberry** (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), **bearberry** (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and **crow berry** (*Empetrum nigrum*) for a true Down-East experience.

Another plant that I have long desired is *Lindera glauca var. salicifolia*, an **Asian spicebush**. Yellow umbel flowers usher in linear leaves that turn pumpkin orange in the fall, a colorful rival to its botanical cousin Sassafras. This *Lindera*'s winter presence, however, is what is most striking. The yellow flowers mature to glossy black fruits and the leaves fade from orange to translucent beige and hang on throughout the winter. I have long admired this winter foliage effect at the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts as well as the beautifully landscaped campus gardens of The Scott Arboretum in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Carex morrowii var. temnolepis is a very fine textured, evergreen sedge. I first saw it twenty years ago at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. It should be more extensively cultivated for its utility and refined beauty. It is very hardy and tolerant of extremely dry shade. This *Carex* has thrived in dry, sandy soil and surface roots at the base of *Pinus parviflora* in the nursery display gardens for many years. It is a great companion with Epimediums!

My enthusiasm for plants is not limited by the length of this page, there's much more to see. Come, explore the nursery fields and display gardens. Indulge your horticultural fervor, we're quite sure it's contagious.

Warren Leach

Foliage Plants for Dynamic Design

Bold Textured Foliage

Acanthopanax s. 'Variegata'
Hydrangea quercifolia
Mahonia bealii
Hosta 'Krossa Regal'
Rodgersia pinnata
Yucca filamentosa 'Golden Sword'

Colored Foliage

Red Foliage

Cotinus coggygria 'Grace'
Physocarpus opulifolius 'Diablo'

Yellow Foliage

Physocarpus opulifolius 'Nugget'
Sorbaria sorbifolia 'Sem'
Spiraea japonica 'White Gold'
Spiraea thunbergii 'Ogon'

Blue Foliage

Dianthus gratianopolitanus
'Firewitch'
Hosta 'Halcyon'
Juniperus squamata 'Blue Star'
Picea pungens 'Montgomery'

Silver Foliage

Artemisia x 'Powis Castle'
Buddleia alternifolia 'Argentea'
Centaurea cineraria 'Colchester White'
Lavandula x intermedia
'Fred Boutin'
Perovskia atriplicifolia
Salix alba sericea
Stachys byzantina

Flowers with Sensuous Fragrance

Clethra alnifolia 'Ruby Spice'
Daphne cneorum
Daphne x burkwoodii 'Carol Mackie'
Daphne x transatlanticum
Rhododendron x 'Millennium'
Rhododendron x 'My Mary'
Syringa cultivars

Foliage Color Texture & Form

The spring garden season is distinguished by a momentous release of energy, that of bursting buds and emerging shoots that transform into unfurled leaves and colorful flowers. It is all very dynamic and dazzling, perhaps even a bit chaotic. This color celebration paints a surreal landscape composed of pink trees; lavender, red and yellow shrubs; and a ground plane tinted blue with bulbs. Thank goodness it's ephemeral! After all that is the nature of flowers.

It is the leaves that offer a myriad of shapes, sizes and colors that sustain the garden through the season. Their foliage form and color is where I start when designing a garden, with subliminal images of brilliant, fragrant and seasonal flowers always close, in my mind's eye. Colorful foliage can offer either an echo or a contrast to flowers and intensify the design effect. For example, the chartreuse leaves of *Spiraea thunbergii* 'Ogon' offer a delicate foreground to the golden bells of Forsythia. The fine textured form of *Spiraea* 'Ogon' emerges with a cloud of white flowers soon after the Forsythia blooms pass. It then holds its pale spring-fresh colored leaves throughout the summer. Chartreuse is the definitive and refreshing color of spring.

Spiraea thunbergii 'Ogon' is a favorite and very versatile performer. This fine textured, five-foot shrub is at home in full sun or partial shade, and is an unparalleled foil through the season for colorful flowers. It sets off red-hot daylilies, such as *Hemerocallis* 'Chicago Apache' or the cool-blue of Siberian Iris 'Sally Kerlin' and the violet blooms of *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' and even the blue leaves of *Hosta* 'Halcyon'.

The characteristics of leaf texture and shape has significant design impact for pleasingly pairing plants. The variations of simple, lobed or pinnately compound leaf form as well as fine or coarse texture, and its relationship to planting design is a principle lesson to grasp. Color design is not exclusive of form. The same chartreuse-colored leaves, whether lobed, like ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Nugget'), or simple, as in the leaf of *Spiraea*, or the pinnately compound leaf of *Sorbaria sorbifolia* 'Sem' are not at all interchangeable in designing pleasing plant combinations. The powerful pairing of the red flowered *Hemerocallis* 'Chicago Apache' and *Spiraea* 'Ogon' is diminished by the coarser texture of ninebark and would look messy with the *Sorbaria*. However, the finer textured flowers of *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' works well with ninebark and the coarser compound leaves and yellow flowers of *Mahonia bealei* sing in harmony with *Sorbaria* 'Sem'. This is the law of dynamic contrasts.

Sorbaria sorbifolia (Ural False *Spiraea*) is one of the first shrubs to leaf out, emerging in March! It is very cold hardy to Zone 2. The cultivar 'Sem' is a new form sporting chartreuse, pinnately compound leaves and red midribs on first flush. *Sorbaria* 'Sem' is a spreading shrub that reaches six feet in height and sports foamy white flowers in July. The linear, blue leaves of switch grass (*Panicum virgatum* 'Dallas Blues') is a pleasing contrast to Sem's feathery foliage. Add Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), *Yucca filamentosa* 'Bright Edge', *Coreopsis* x 'Full Moon', *Spiraea japonica* 'Gold Dwarf' and Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) for the beginnings of a sensational garden. Repeat the chartreuse colored leaves with *Cotinus coggygria* 'Golden Spirit' echoed by the pale-yellow flowers of *Coreopsis* x 'Full Moon'.

The color red is heavy, regardless of leaf size, and advances towards you in space. In counterpoint the color blue recedes. The maroon-leaved smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple') adapts to severe pruning. It can be coppiced to the ground, which controls its size to four-to-five feet. The rounded leaves pair up beautifully with the pinnately compound foliage of the red-leaf rose (*Rosa glauca*). Add more maroon foliage with *Eupatorium rugosum* 'Chocolate'. Shift the color spectrum from blue-red foliage to orange-red flowers such as *Hemerocallis* 'August Flame'. The violet flowers of Russian sage add heat to this fiery combination.

Many herbaceous perennials have form and foliage that is as tough as any woody tree or shrub. Bluestar species, such as Arkansas bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) and willowleaf bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana* var. *salicifolia*), top my list. *Amsonia* blooms with blue flowers in May, but the real show is the fine textured,

quill-like green leaves arranged around two-to-three foot stems. It is indestructible, standing up to heat and drought in full sun and remaining unblemished. Late September brings on a spectacular color change to butter yellow. Plant Amsonia as a hedge that never needs trimming, or in combination with daylilies and daffodils to obscure less than perfect foliage.

Bigroot geranium (*Geranium macrorrhizum*) is also high on my list of tough and beautiful perennials for foliage. It too is drought tolerant and thrives in partial shade to sun. The round, pleated leaves turn reddish in the winter and remain semi-evergreen. *Geranium macrorrhizum* and its cultivars make excellent low-maintenance groundcovers, a foliar skirt under *Sorbaria sorbifolia* 'Sem'.

The fern family certainly provides a depth of leaf diversity. Their intricate furled fronds are memorialized in classic architectural details. Lush and luxuriant, ferns are also rugged garden plants. The evergreen Christmas fern's (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) dark green leathery fronds make a great combination with the bold bronze leaves of Bergenia. Maidenhair fern's (*Adiantum pedatum*) delicate filagree shows off next to large bold leaves of Hosta or *Ligularia dentata* 'Desdemona'. Maidenhair ferns and moss makes a magic carpet under Japanese Maples. The family of lady ferns (Athyrium) offers a diversity of colored and patterned pinnae, a Victorian favorite. Silver and pink pigments many selections of Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum'). The statuesque Royal Fern's (*Osmunda regalis*) pinnately compound, locust-like leaves stand three-to-four foot tall and are as handsome as any woody rival.

Embrace the different seasons in your garden, with the cycles of showy flowers and fruits. Design to sustain the vigor of spring, by planting a framework of fine and colorful foliage.

Warren Leach

Hydrangea Fever on Saturday, May 29

Joan Harrison, a master gardener, is the founding president of the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society and author of *The Colorful World of Hydrangeas*, a Hydrangea Handbook for the Home Gardener. For the past twenty years she has focused her horticultural research on hydrangeas by traveling extensively and by studying the many hydrangeas planted in her own garden. She has visited gardens featuring hydrangeas in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium and France, including the Shamrock Collection in France with over 1,200 varieties. In 2007 she was a participant at the First International Hydrangea Conference in Ghent, Belgium where representatives from around the world gathered to share information about hydrangeas. Her writing and photographs have appeared in such magazines as Cape Cod Life and Nantucket Today. A woman who has never met a hydrangea she doesn't like, she loves to share her knowledge and passion with fellow fans of hydrangeas.



Joan Harrison will talk about Hydranges & sign books at Tranquil Lake on Saturday, May 29 at 11 a.m.

Tranquil Lake Nursery Receives Recognition

In early February, Tranquil Lake Nursery received the **First Place Award of Excellence for Residential Landscape Design and Installation** from the Rhode Island Nursery & Landscape Association in their annual design competition. Later that same month, the "Drought Tolerant Plants from Around the World", exhibit at the Rhode Island Spring Flower Show won a **Gold Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society** and **The Elisabeth and Roger Swain Award for Design and Execution**. We hope you visited the show and enjoyed our drought-tolerant silver garden.

Spring Garden Festival

Saturday, May 1

10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Workshop & Demonstrations

- 10:00 Cutting Back, Spring Pruning, and Coppicing Your Trees
Warren Leach
- 10:30 Planting the Roof Garden
Andy Balon & Warren Leach
- 11:00 Herbs for Fragrance, Tasting and Garden Ornamentation
Gilbert Moore
- 11:30 Favorite Daylilies and Companion Plants with Bloom from June to September
Philip Boucher
- 12:00 Wattling and Weaving Garden Fences and Structures
Andy Balon
- 12:30 Plants Underfoot: Selected Plants that Can Withstand Walking
Debi Hogan
- 1:00 Ornamental Trees & Shrubs to Add a Long Season of Bloom
Warren Leach
- 1:30 Spring Flower Arranging: Japanese Style
Gilbert Moore
- 2:00 Digging, Dividing and Planting Perennials
Philip Boucher
- 2:30 Constructing A Bench Planted with Thyme
Andy Balon and Warren Leach
- 3:00 Design Tour of the Gardens of Tranquil Lake Nursery
Warren Leach

The Spring Garden Festival is free and open to the public. Bring a picnic lunch and lawn chair 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 descriptions of each garden talk visit us on the web at 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 is also provided for most varieties. You will also find a **downloadable catalog of our most popular daylilies and iris**. Many specialized list of daylilies by color, height, flower size and more; copies of the plant articles from past newsletters and information on garden lectures and events is also available. Check out these ever updated resources at www.tranquil-lake.com.

Plum Crazy Collection

Deep purple and its variations add a colorful splash to the summer garden. The purple blooms of the six daylilies listed below will provide a profusion of color through the season to complement the yellows of coreopsis and rudbeckia and the oranges of asclepias and trolius as well as play with variegated foliage.

One each of **Decatur Prince, Hamlet, Nutmeg Shadows, Strutter's Ball, Swirling Water** and **Trahlyta**. (A \$69 value) 6 plants for \$60.00.

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

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 turn onto Danforth Street. Then take the first onto River Street. Tranquil Lake Nursery is the fourth driveway on the left.

Note: The Danforth Street bridge was damaged in the floods. Continue west on Route 44 and make the next right, then a right again onto River Street.

***** On-Line Newsletter *****

Tranquil Lake Nursery is going green with our newsletter. To conserve the natural resources needed to print and mail more than 10,000 newsletters and also to conserve money, we will post all future newsletters on-line in both HTML and PDF format and will send you an e-mail link. To continue receiving our informative newsletter, send us your e-mail address to tranquil-lake@earthlink.net. We won't share your information and will send a 10% off coupon as a thank you.

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