

TRANQUIL TIMES

The Newsletter of Tranquil Lake Nursery

No. 31

Spring, 2009

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 25, 2009 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 2 | What's New in the Garden
Perennials & More |
| May 9 | Planting Combinations That
Offer Maximum Impact in
the Garden |
| May 16 | Foliage and Flowers with
Color, Texture and a Long
Season of Interest |
| May 23 | Combining Edible and
Ornamental Plants in the
Mixed Border |
| May 30 | Fragrant Flowers & Scented
Foliage |

18th Annual Open House & Summer Garden Festival

Saturday, July 18, 2009
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

Renewal

I have been experiencing the biggest thrill lately from the sprouting of an acorn into a seedling oak tree. Now, this is not just any oak seedling. Although we do have many majestic native oak species common to our region, the oak seedling I have become so enamored with comes from an evergreen scrub oak that is native to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona (*Quercus turbinella*). It has grey-green, holly like leaves and exquisite elongated acorns.

I collected a couple of these acorns last August when visiting Arizona. I cold stratified them for six weeks in the refrigerator. Then, with much anticipation, I potted them up and placed the pots on a propagating heat mat. Of course, the Sonoran Live Oak is not hardy to Massachusetts, but it will be perfectly happy in a cool greenhouse over our long winters.

It doesn't take long for the visitor to Tranquil Lake Nursery to become aware of our passion for all types of plants. Whether hardy or tropical, woody or herbaceous, edible or ornamental, a diverse collection of specimen plants make up our display gardens and sales area.

This passion for collecting plants and making gardens is certainly not new for me. By the age of five, I was sowing flower and vegetable seeds with my mother in Maine - on a tray table by a sunny winter window. Since then, I've made gardens from Maine to Virginia. These gardens are both richly architectural and attentively naturalistic. Working alone or with a crew, I've transplanted tall trees, moved massive rocks and levitated water.

So why am I so ecstatic about planting one lowly acorn? For that matter, why do I get such a thrill when I find a new plant that I simply must acquire. For me this excitement is elemental, almost childlike. It is the innocence of discovering and experiencing something new. Now I know that starting a plant from seed is nothing new, but the pleasure and reward is very real.

Certainly, the richness of gardening is much more than an analytical exercise, it is an amalgam of art and science. Starting this oak reinforced the importance of being in touch with my feelings and expressing them in the gardens and landscapes. It is an opportunity for experiencing the magic inherent to gardening.

As reliable as daylilies are, I feel this same magical exuberance of spirit when a familiar and favorite cultivar's bud opens and blooms. Indeed, it was with this same expressive wonder that Sir George Sitwell recorded in *On the Making of Gardens*; "it is possible to introduce a touch of imaginative beauty into almost any garden by finding the most perfect form for one of its features, or by giving expression to the soul of some particular flower or tree."

We needn't look far in place or time for horticultural mentors who sowed seeds of horticultural stewardship. The Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain or Polly Hill's legacy arboretum on Martha's Vineyard or nurserymen Harvey Jackson and Lud Hoffman, mentors to Phil and me, quickly come to mind.

Come, explore the nursery fields and display gardens. Indulge your horticultural fervor, we're quite sure it's contagious.

Warren Leach

Plants That Add Magic

Bold Textured Foliage

Hydrangea quercifolia
Mahonia bealei
Hosta 'Krossa Regal'
Rodgersia pinnata
Yucca filamentosa 'Golden Sword'

Colored Foliage

Red Foliage

Cotinus coggygia 'Grace'
Physocarpus opulifolius 'Diablo'

Yellow Foliage

Physocarpus opulifolius 'Nugget'
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

Garden Touring

During the last week of March, Debi and I set off on a whirlwind garden tour, driving to Charleston, SC and back in just nine days. Our journey was driven by the pursuit of spring, as well as the desire to visit a family member who had recently relocated to the south. We called upon favorite nurseries and botanic gardens in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, Washington D.C., North Carolina and South Carolina along the way.

The swelling and reddening buds of red maple (*Acer rubrum*) ushered us onwards to the south. Soon we were encountering yellow daffodils, forsythia, spikehazel (*Corylopsis*) and fragrant *Edgeworthia* at **Brent and Becky Heath's** Gloucester Virginia nursery. The color mounted, with verdant green grass and magenta redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*). Finally, in South Carolina, we found dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) in full bloom, their white bracts curiously cloaked in Spanish moss (*Tillandsia*). Crapemyrtles, camellias, magnolias and azaleas teemed, as if to tease us with plants too tender for our northern gardens.

Though the flowers were a welcome reprieve from a long New England winter and seemingly latent spring, it was the garden experiences in the designed landscapes that I savored the most. While the design principles are universal, I find discovering and translating their applications in a diversity of gardens to be most entertaining. And there are always new ideas to bring back and try out at home. Here are just a few of the experiences that we encountered exploring gardens on our southern excursion.

Middleton Place, near Charleston, is considered to be the first great American landscaped garden. It offers much more than just a historic, eighteenth-century, landscape architectural footnote. The grounds are laid out with Euclid exactitude, planted with camellias and azaleas that create a vivid spring show. The house, now mostly in ruins, is situated on high ground overlooking an elbow bend in the Ashley River. The house and garden is centered on a main axis; it's line reaches out into the Ashley River. Undulating, grassy slopes descend to the river with triangular pools, 'butterfly ponds', on either side of the central axis line. This is Middleton's genius. It exemplifies Fletcher's Steele's design critique recommendation of making the best use of the land as one found it and going to where the axis is. Since we stayed on the property, we were fortunate to be able to rise early to experience this 'Genius Loci' at daybreak. The sun's red ball rose from the river mist on the garden's axis. What a focal point!

Brookgreen Gardens, in Myrtle Beach, SC, offered enchanting experiences found among intimate enclosures. The gardens are laid out as rooms and galleries containing marvelous sculpture. Geometric patterns of pools, masonry walls and lines of palms and live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) form much of the orderliness of the garden architecture on a very flat site. The most magical space, for me, was within a grove of live oaks whose massive trunks and broad spreading limbs, festooned with Spanish moss, created an organic dome around a large, waist-high circular pool, a giant cistern with water overflowing into a circumscribing rill. The reflections transfix your eyes. It is evocative of a pool enclosed by gabled yew hedges at Hidcote in England, which embodies a similar enchanting trick of scale and space. It offers a wonderful harmony of contrasts.

At **Winterthur**, in Delaware, we enjoyed another mesmerizing concert of contrasts. On a steep hillside, elephantine trunks of beech trees seem to hold apart the blue sky and the ground, equally deep-blue. Immeasurable masses of Scilla and Chionodoxa forms a surrealistic landscape that blurs the boundaries of space and laws of gravity.

The fundamentals of space are the most captivating aspects of garden design and perhaps the hardest to communicate and teach. The many display gardens at Tranquil Lake Nursery express these principles on a reasonable scale, manageable to any home gardeners' property. The gardens have continued to evolve and change over more than twenty years. This not only shows how maturing plants change but also how new opportunities arise to create and plant new gardens.

The 'Lower Display Garden' was laid out in 1987 overlooking a glacial kettle-hole pond. It has axial lines that are perpendicular to the end of the house and centered to the office door. Another line converges on an existing red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). The central axis from the office door incorporates a panel of grass flanked by triangular beds. The garden beds are not perfectly symmetrical.

The other axial line which terminates on the red cedar, turns into a broad gravel path. To the right of the central axis on the banks on the pond are massive swamp white oaks (*Quercus palustris*). We transplanted a large fastigate yew (*Taxus x media* 'Robusta') to the left triangular bed. This counterbalanced the oak in an asymmetrical harmony.

Over the years the mixed borders of perennials, tropical annuals and woody plants have varied. The fastigate yew, now over twenty feet tall, and accompanying dwarf blue spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Montgomery') also grew, creating an opportunity to make a new garden nestled behind them within the left triangular bed. In 2005, we started by building a semi-circular stone sitting wall within a square behind the yew. Glass and stone mosaic dragonflies add a bit of whimsy within a ring of bluestone concentric to the stone wall.

Inspired by Jo Ann Gardener's book, *Elegant Silvers: Striking Plants for Every Garden* we planted this pocket garden in a color scheme in silver, blue and grey. Weeping willowleaf pears (*Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula') with silvery-grey, willow-like leaves, silver willow (*Salix alba sericea*), rosemary willow (*Salix elaeagnos*) and *Sophora davidii* are pleached and pruned to form an airy screen and give seclusion the circular seat. Our ever growing collection of silver-foliage plants, both hardy and tender go on to stage a luminous display.

The 'Silver Garden' is partially hidden from the main axis of the original garden layout but becomes a focal point as you walk around the corner. Contrasting red and silver foliage also adds a heighten sense of depth and distance, a good trick for small garden spaces.

Our newest project, a rain garden, was inspired by a trip to Arizona last summer. So, whether you are looking for tricks of perspective and balance, ideas in color design, or just practical horticultural advise and quality plants, come and explore our gardens. We hope they will inspire you and save you a few thousand miles of traveling.

Warren Leach

Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant of the Year for 2009 is *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'. An elegant dwarf grass, *Hakonechloa macra* is native to the forests of Japan. This form's chartreuse and green striped arching leaves add shimmer and light to the shady border. It is an ideal companion to blue-leaf hostas or the round polished leaves of European ginger.



The Silver Garden at Tranquil Lake Nursery, with semi-circular sitting wall and glass mosaic paving.

Spring Garden Festival

Saturday, April 25

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

Workshop & Demonstrations

- 10:00 Cutting Back, Spring Pruning, and Coppicing Your Trees
Warren Leach
- 10:30 Planting the Rain Garden
Andy Balon & Kris Blackmar
- 11:00 Planting a Sedum Wall
Andy Balon and Kris Blackmar
- 11:30 June Blooming Siberian Iris, Daylilies & Their Companions
Philip Boucher
- 12:00 Wattleing and Weaving Garden Fences and Structures
Gilbert Moore
- 12:30 Ornamental Trees & Shrubs to Add a Long Season of Bloom
Warren Leach
- 1:00 Design Tips for Adding Ornamental Trees and Shrubs to the Border
Warren Leach
- 1:30 Herbs for Fragrance, Tasting & Garden Ornamentation
Debi Hogan
- 2:00 Arranging with Spring Flowers and Herbs
Debi Hogan
- 2:30 Digging & Dividing Perennials
Shirley Driscoll
- 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 more information call (508) 252-4002 or 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 of the flower is also provided for most varieties. A new feature is a **downloadable catalog of our most popular daylilies and iris**

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 nurnal bloomers, fragrant New listrs daylilies, and daylilies that rebloom. A new addition is **daylilies hybridized by New England breeders** and introduced by Tranquil Lake Nusrery.

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

Beautiful & Reliably Blooming Daylily Collection

These stunning and long blooming daylilies are sure not to disappoint/ They will each send up several scapes to provide a profusion of summer bloom. Each plant is also a good increaser in the garden with minimum attention.

One each of **Agape Love, Davidson Update, Geraldine Dean, Ethel Shepherd, Susie Wong and Top Award**. 6 plants for \$66.00.

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

Display Gardens at Tranquil

Visit Tranquil Lake and wander through our ever-increasing display gardens. a raiin garden was added in the fall of 2008 and will be planted at our Spring Festival in April. Behind it is a new stone wall which will be planted in sedums and other succulents.

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 Nuresery is the fourth driveway on the left.

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