

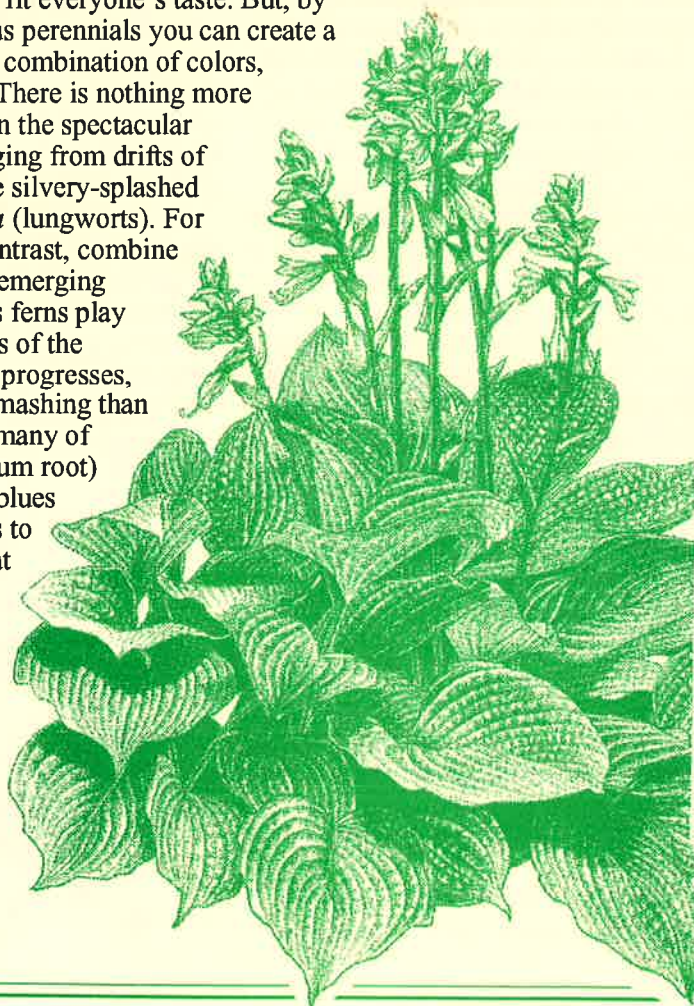
Shade Aristocrats

—by Randy Best

Hostas, hostas, I know... you've got the green one, and the variegated one...but if these are the only varieties you have in your garden, you are missing out. With the many leaf shapes and shades of green, blue, yellow and gold, plus the endless combinations of variegation, this plant has a place in every garden. As long as you can provide a semi-shaded or shaded location with well-drained but moderately moist soil, you can grow hosta. Want a plant in the garden that is going to thrive and be easy to care for? Hosta is that plant. From the tiny dwarfs to the bold, majestic giants, hostas will give you success. Use them in groupings, around trees, massed as edgings, or as ground covers. Large individual specimen plants work well near ponds with azaleas and rhododendrons, or in among smaller varieties to provide a very attractive garden focal point. And the flowers of hostas should not be overlooked. They come in a wide range of whites, purples, and bluish-lilacs, and some are superbly fragrant.

The coarse leaves of hostas tend to break up the monotony of a landscape design. Although I might want a garden filled with hundreds of varieties of hostas, that might not fit everyone's taste. But, by using other herbaceous perennials you can create a knock-your-socks-off combination of colors, textures, and shapes. There is nothing more pleasing in spring than the spectacular foliage of hosta emerging from drifts of *Viola* (violets) and the silvery-splashed foliage of *Pulmonaria* (lungworts). For a fantastic textural contrast, combine hosta with ferns - the emerging fiddleheads of various ferns play against the bold leaves of the hostas. As the season progresses, what could be more smashing than the bronzy foliage of many of the new *Heuchera* (alum root) planted with the cool blues of hosta? Other plants to combine with hostas at this time of year include *Aquilegia* (columbine), *Thalictrum* (meadow rue), *Astilbe*, with feathery plumes of eye-catching colors and *Dicentra* (bleeding heart), with its dainty dangling flowers.

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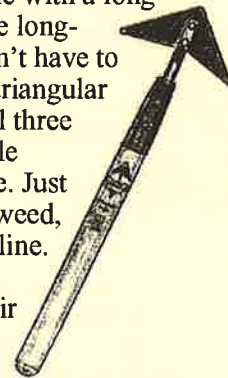
Weed This...

Garden Helpers I Wouldn't Be Without

—by Helen Gardiner

Felco Pruning Shears - I never walk into the garden without my Felcos. They are one of the most important tools I own, and I consider them my true friends because they never let me down. These shears are extremely well-made, hold a sharp edge, and are strong enough to prune even small tree limbs. I keep the blades clean with a little WD40 - and Behnke's Garden Shop carries replacement blades if I ever need them.

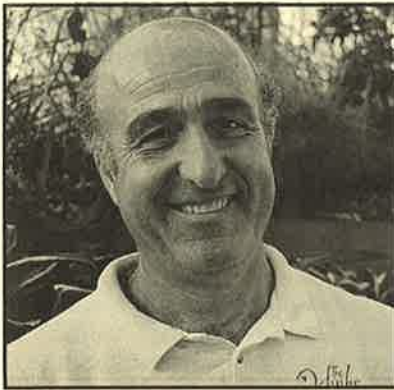
Winged Weeder - makes all weeding jobs easier. It is available with a long or short handle. With the long-handled weeder, you don't have to get on your knees. The triangular blade is sharpened on all three sides, and the long handle allows for good leverage. Just slide the blade over the weed, cutting it off at the root line. Most annual weeds will then just die without their leaves, but if you want, you can easily pull the weed up by the roots with the same tool. Try it - you'll love this weeder.



Rose Defense - This great organic product works as an insecticide, fungicide and insect repellent *all at the same time*. It is effective on rose problems - rust, black spot and powdery mildew. It kills pests quickly while leaving beneficial insects unharmed, has residual strength for 21 days, and protects foliage from invading fungi. As an added bonus, Rose Defense is not harmful to the environment, pets or people.

Helen is the Manager
of our Garden Shop

Meet Joseph Panossian



Joseph, Assistant Manager of the Woody Plant Department, grew up in the Syrian coastal town of Lattakia, an old town, built by the Romans and named for Julius Caesar's daughter. He is the son of an Armenian father and a Greek mother. Joseph and his family were always interested in gardening.

He studied Agricultural Science at the University of Aleppo. Upon graduation, he taught chemistry and science at a middle school there.

In the fall of 1981 he came to Maryland to get his Masters in Agriculture at the University of Maryland. Driving from the campus back to his home in Laurel he saw the Help Wanted sign at Behnke's. He came in and talked with Helmut, who hired him on the spot. Joseph thought it would be a very good way to learn about the plants in the area.

He says, "I met Mr. Behnke and told him my plans to get my Masters degree - he said 'the best school is here - you won't learn about plants from books.' He was right. I have learned a lot in these 15 years at Behnke's. I like to say that I am a graduate from Behnke University!"

Joseph says "I would like to see more Behnke University graduates. I think the nursery is the best place to learn about plants and management."

He played volleyball with the Syrian International team and still continues to play. He enjoys cooking, outdoor activities of all kinds, and spends his free time in the garden.

(Continued from page 1)

But after this blaze of spring color subsides, what other plants might we consider? The grassy foliage and most unusual three-lobed flowers of *Tradescantia* (spiderwort) and the lushly-blooming spikey flowers of the many varieties of *Veronica* (speedwell) are good candidates.

In late summer and fall, try *Lobelia* (cardinal flower) with its towering spikes of jewel-tone flowers in shades of red, pink and blue; *Kirengeshoma* (yellow waxbells) with its maple-like foliage and yellow, egg-shaped buds; or the subtle intensity of *Begonia grandis* with its delicate flowers in colors of white or pink, and striking angular, red-backed foliage. Also for late season bloom, consider Japanese anemones which send up their great sprays of charming flowers. And let's not forget the plant that needs better PR, the toad lily, *Tricyrtis* (With a name like that it's gotta be good!) with its unique and lovely exotic flowers. Other great combinations can be achieved using the diverse group of ornamental grasses, from the tiny tufts of the miniature *Carex* to the striking vertical accents of *Miscanthus*. An awe-inspiring combination is *Hosta* 'Frances Williams' surrounded by drifts of *Hakonehloa* 'aureola', or, a catch-your-eye focal point of *Hosta* 'Piedmont Gold' fronted by *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'. Just use your imagination and think of your garden as a canvas and the plants as your palette....and paint the landscape.

Some of my favorite varieties are: *Hosta* 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa' has beautiful cupped and puckered chartreuse-yellow leaves painted with wide brush strokes of blue and green on the margins. Absolutely splendid! I consider this one of the best.

Hosta 'Diamond Tiara', which is dusted with sparkles that catch rays of sun filtering through the canopy of trees, has medium-green foliage surrounded by a high contrast white edge. A fast-growing and vigorous small variety.

Hosta 'Midwest Magic' is an astounding newcomer which goes

through a dramatic chameleon effect. It emerges in spring with gold-green leaves that later become metallic gold with a contrasting green edge. This variety becomes very cupped and puckered as it matures with the added plus of light lavender flowers in the summer.

Hosta 'Christmas Tree', with its crinkled, wide, deep green foliage and creamy white edge, is a very choice variety that will make any hosta lover's eyes light up.

Hosta 'Great Expectations', with its wide irregular margin of blue and green streaking into and enveloping the bright yellow leaf center of early spring, cannot be equalled in terms of sheer beauty.

Last but not least, is *Hosta* 'Invincible'. This is an indispensable variety. Yes, the leaves might be green, but they have extremely heavy substance and a glossy surface as though they had been polished with Pledge®. Adding further to the already outstanding qualifications of this plant are the masses of fragrant light lavender flowers in summer.

This list could go on and on....because Behnke's has one of the largest offerings of hosta varieties in the metropolitan area.

Consider hostas the next time you need a plant to brighten a shady area in the garden. As perennials, they almost guarantee you success, and will give you many years of enjoyment for your home and garden.

Randy Best, Manager of our Perennial Department, is affectionately known as 'Mr. Hosta'.



A New Breed of Crape Myrtles

Until recently, crape myrtles were considered too risky to be grown with confidence this far north. But, thanks to a new breed of crape myrtle hybridized at the National Arboretum by the late Dr. Egolf, this one time elusive dream is now a reality for Washington gardeners. Not only are the The National Arboretum Hybrids more cold-hardy than older crape myrtles, but they are mildew-resistant as well. There are many varieties of these hybrids, most of which are named for Native American tribes. The diversity of bloom colors and growth habits all but guarantees that one of them will fit into just about any garden. The bloom season is long — up to three months, and many varieties add beautiful exfoliating (peeling) bark to their long list of attributes. The National Arboretum Hybrids range widely in height. For example:

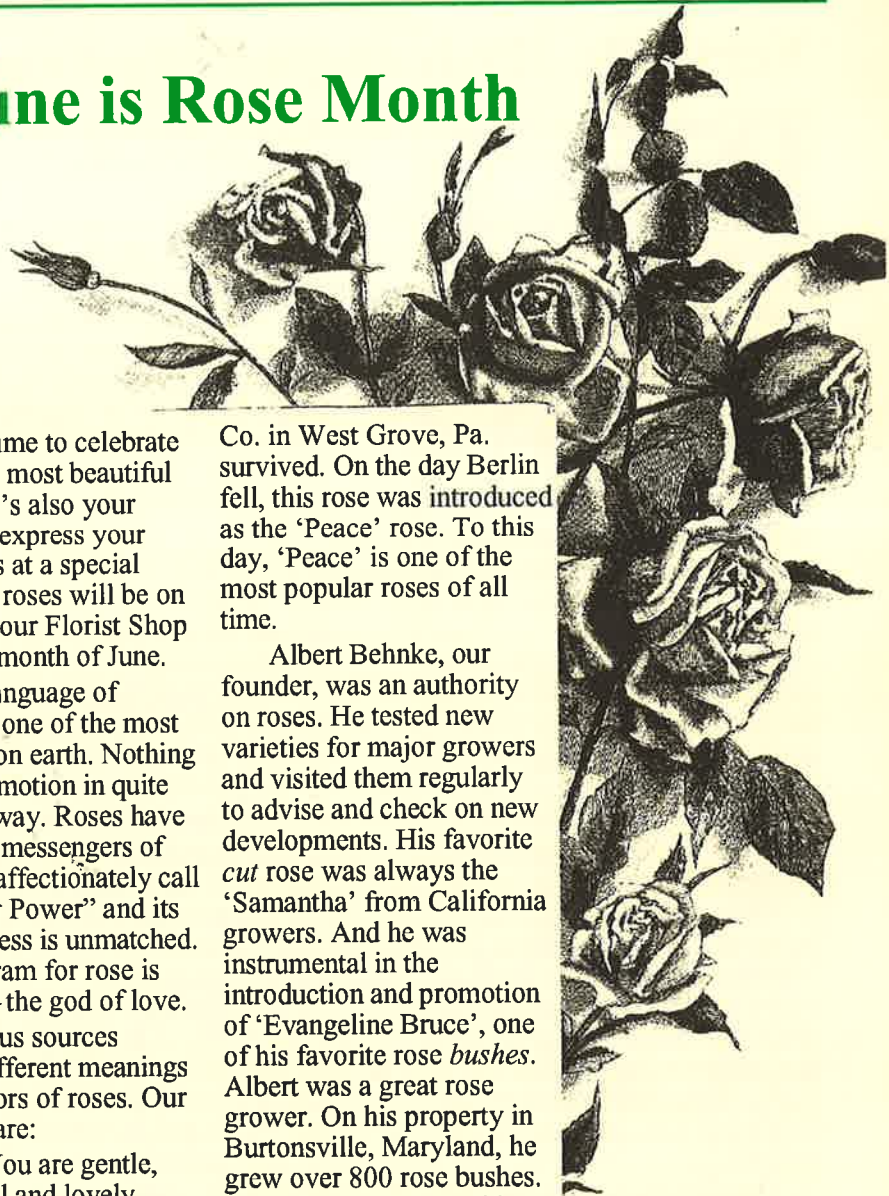
- ‘**Sentinel**’ is a compact, globe-shaped plant with bright purple flowers, and grows only 3 to 5 feet high.
- ‘**Pecos**’ has medium pink blooms and grows 5 to 10 feet in height, retaining a globular shape.
- ‘**Tonto**’ blooms in red and grows to 10 feet in height.

Growing 15 to 20 feet tall are:

- ‘**Catawba**’ blooms deep purple, and will reach 20 feet when mature.
- ‘**Comanche**’ has coral pink blossoms, and grows to 16 feet.
- ‘**Miami**’ has dark pink flowers with beautiful cinnamon bark.
- ‘**Muskogee**’ is very hardy, and blooms in light lavender.
- ‘**Natchez**’ is the hardiest of all the hybrids. It has white flowers and is a broad, tall plant.
- ‘**Potomac**’ blooms in clear pink, and reaches 18 feet in height.
- ‘**Tuscarora**’ is a broad, vase-shaped plant with coral-pink corsages of blooms. It reaches 16 feet.

by Helmut Jaehnigen

June is Rose Month



June is a time to celebrate one of our most beautiful flowers. It's also your chance to express your sentiments at a special price. Cut roses will be on special in our Florist Shop the entire month of June.

The language of flowers is one of the most powerful on earth. Nothing conveys emotion in quite the same way. Roses have long been messengers of love. We affectionately call it “Flower Power” and its effectiveness is unmatched. The anagram for rose is “Eros” — the god of love.

Various sources ascribe different meanings to the colors of roses. Our favorites are:

- Pink: You are gentle, graceful and lovely
- Red: I love you
- Yellow: Joy, friendship
- Combination of Pink and White: I will always love you
- Red and Yellow: Passionate thoughts
- A single rose: Perpetual love
- A thornless rose: love at first sight

An interesting story occurred during the Nazi invasion of France in 1940. The Meilland Rose House flew cuttings of a new, untried rose to growers all over the world. Only those grown by the Conard Pyle

Co. in West Grove, Pa. survived. On the day Berlin fell, this rose was introduced as the ‘Peace’ rose. To this day, ‘Peace’ is one of the most popular roses of all time.

Albert Behnke, our founder, was an authority on roses. He tested new varieties for major growers and visited them regularly to advise and check on new developments. His favorite cut rose was always the ‘Samantha’ from California growers. And he was instrumental in the introduction and promotion of ‘Evangeline Bruce’, one of his favorite rose bushes. Albert was a great rose grower. On his property in Burtonsville, Maryland, he grew over 800 rose bushes. In the summer he would often come bearing armloads of beautiful roses and pass them out to everyone he happened to meet. He supplied many of the area hospitals, nursing homes, and doctor's offices with his beautiful blooms. Albert had a lifelong love affair with roses, and you could say it was a two-way street — he even married a ‘Rose’.

Take advantage of June's abundance and feed your soul with roses. You'll always find the finest quality and best selection at Behnke Nurseries.

by Pamela Hoelk,
manager of our Florist
Shop since its beginning
in 1982. Pam retired this
spring and will be touring
the country with her
husband Jerry in their
Air Stream trailer.

Versatile Hydrangeas are True-Blue, Too

One of the best all-around plants for shady gardens is the hydrangea. These plants provide beauty all summer with their lush foliage and flower clusters of white, blue, pink and red (and many shades in-between).

Hydrangeas fascinate gardeners with their ability to produce flowers in different hues, based on the pH of the soil in which they're grown. For a true blue, a rare color in the garden, the pH should be lowered with the application of aluminum sulfate to about 4.5. The addition of lime will "sweeten" the soil, raise the pH, and produce flowers in shades of pink.

Ideally, hydrangeas should be grown in a location that is neither full shade nor full sun. They'll wilt if the sun beats down too long; and in full shade they're likely to refuse to bloom. That would be a pity, for blooms are definitely the *pièce de résistance* of this handsome plant.

The most familiar type of hydrangea produces flowers in a large ball-shaped cluster. Most will grow to 3 or 4 feet, but dwarf varieties, which are more compact and grow only 2 to 3 feet tall are available also. One is 'Pink Elf', a particularly pretty dwarf hydrangea with small leaves and pink flowers.

There are many blue-flowering hydrangeas, but perhaps the best

known is 'Nikko Blue' which produces a large ball of true-blue flowers (in acid soil).

The lacecap hydrangeas are popular for the delicate white or blue flowers resembling the hand-crocheted hats made for infants in the last century. A particularly nice lacecap variety is *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Ayesa', also known as the 'Silver Slippers' hydrangea. The flowers have large spoon-shaped sepals which are pale lavender with a silvery sheen and the foliage is a lustrous, deep green. It will grow to 4 feet. 'Tokyo Delight' has flower clusters of silvery white that shimmer in the moonlight on summer evenings.

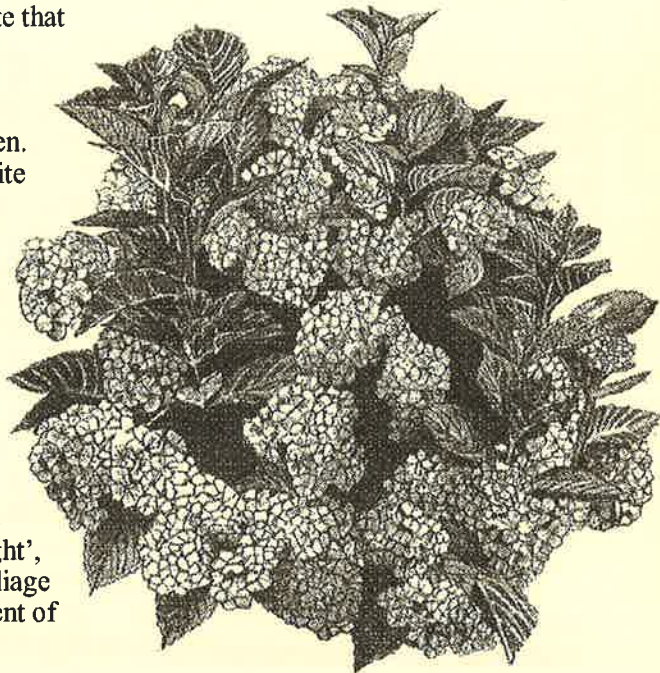
Oakleaf hydrangea is a valuable addition to any garden. Its beautiful foliage, large white flowers and exceptional fall color (brilliant bronze) earn it a prized place in the landscape — although this is one hydrangea which requires a sunny spot. It will not perform well in shade.

Climbing hydrangea will cling strongly to its support and will produce abundant clusters of white flowers. The Japanese hydrangea 'Moonlight', also has beautifully veined foliage with a silvery sheen reminiscent of reflected moonbeams.

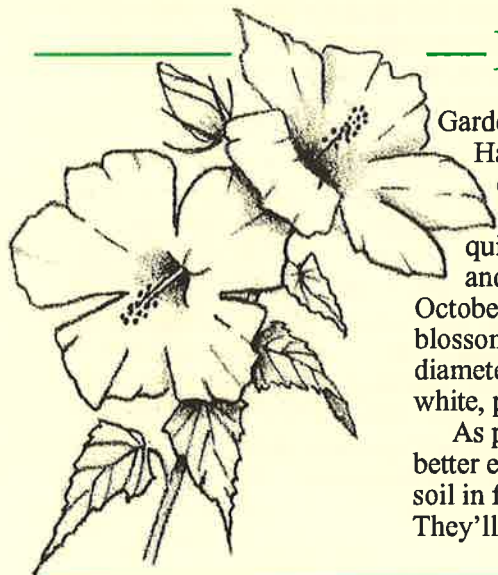
Fresh cut hydrangeas are wonderful in summer — by themselves or arranged with other summer flowers. And dried hydrangea flower clusters are popular in arrangements, wreaths and potpourri for year-round enjoyment indoors. They'll dry easily if hung upside down in a dark, dry spot.

With all this going for them, it's no wonder hydrangeas have been popular since the days of grandmother's garden. Tuck a hydrangea into a semi-shady spot in your garden. It will soon earn a spot in your heart.

—Helmut Jaehnigen



Hardy Hibiscus



Gardening on a budget can be a challenge.

Hardy hibiscus packs a wallop — for only \$6.99 you get a large plant in a one-gallon pot. These plants quickly provide a big splash of color, and they'll bloom from July to early October, requiring little care. The flower blossoms are huge - some up to 10 inches in diameter, and are available in shades of white, pink and red.

As perennials, hibiscus get bigger and better each year. Plant them in good garden soil in full sun and give them plenty of water. They'll provide you with masses of tropical-

like blooms. In one season they can reach the height of 6 feet. They make a wonderful showy screen against a garden fence or perimeter, or a grouping makes an instant garden wherever it is planted.

Cut your hibiscus back each fall and mulch them well. They are late to emerge each spring - you won't see their shoots until around the first week of May - but then they'll grow quickly and bloom all season.

We have several varieties of hardy hibiscus available this year. They have been bred for improved colors, attractive foliage,

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extended blooming period and winter hardiness. Among them:

'Lord Baltimore' - my favorite, has huge, showy brilliant red flowers with ruffled, overlapping petals. It grows to about six feet, and looks great underplanted with low-growing annuals and perennials. It is an excellent performer and the best rebloomer.

'Lady Baltimore' - blooms in bright pink with contrasting red centers. Grows to four feet tall.

'Anne Arundel' - offers 6 - 8 inch flowers of a glowing pink - with attractive Japanese maple-like foliage. Grows to six feet.

'Albert Behnke' - pure white 6 inch flowers produced in abundance on very attractive foliage. This variety, named for the founder of Behnke Nurseries, is one of the most prolific bloomers.

'Sweet Caroline' - huge pink flowers with deeper pink veins hybridized by Dr. Harold Winters of The National Agriculture Center in Beltsville MD.

— Helmut Jaehnigen

Behnke Nurseries joins CyberSpace

The Behnke Nurseries Co. now has a World Wide Web site. Do you need an idea for a tree to plant in your yard? Do you want to know how to prepare the soil for your new rose garden? Our web pages can provide the answers when you can't get to the Nursery in person. Visit our web site 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Our address is:

<http://www.behnke.com/behnkes>

The World Wide Web (WWW) is a collection of inter-networked computers that has become known as the Information Superhighway or Internet. Users can access information through servers such as American Online, CompuServe or ARInternet.

Our web pages contain information we believe will be of interest to you - gardening information, notes about our specials, and more... Feel free to give us ideas about what you would like to see on our web pages. Our email address is: behnkes@ari.net.

Flowering Vines

Flowering vines can contribute to your landscape with their graceful vining habit and colorful blooms. What could be more picturesque than twining branches, abundant with blooms, spilling over a trellis, garden wall or fence. Vines lend a relaxed, informal quality to the landscape. And they can be grown in a small amount of ground, as long as the soil is well-prepared and the pH is correct. Use vines to create a fast-growing screen for privacy, to soften a bare wall or decorate a fence post. Below is a short list of our favorites.

Mandevilla Vine - a tropical vine with dark green, glossy leaves that provide an excellent background for its bright pink trumpet-shaped flowers and elegant trailing tendrils. It is a fast-growing, prolific bloomer and will decorate any sunny place in your garden, deck or patio with gusto.

Trumpet Vines offer a long season of bloom in brilliant shades of red and orange. This vigorous and easy-to-grow vine has lush foliage and grows in ordinary soil in a sunny location. The blossoms of the trumpet vines are a favorite of hummingbirds. New varieties for 1996:

'Dragon Lady' sports evergreen leaves and red trumpet flowers in spring and early summer.

'Morning Calm' has huge 5 inch trumpet flowers in shades of orange, peach and melon.

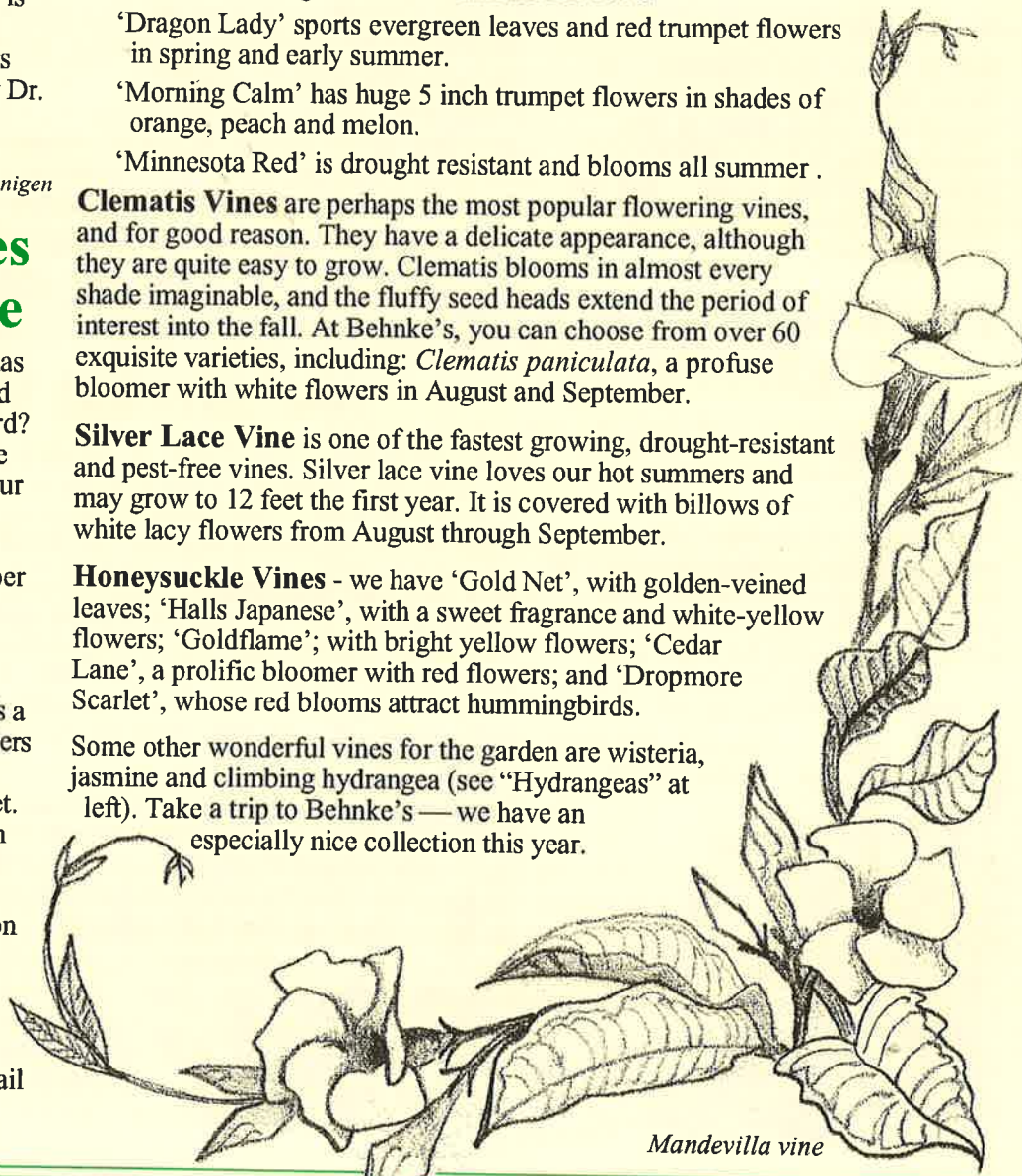
'Minnesota Red' is drought resistant and blooms all summer.

Clematis Vines are perhaps the most popular flowering vines, and for good reason. They have a delicate appearance, although they are quite easy to grow. Clematis blooms in almost every shade imaginable, and the fluffy seed heads extend the period of interest into the fall. At Behnke's, you can choose from over 60 exquisite varieties, including: *Clematis paniculata*, a profuse bloomer with white flowers in August and September.

Silver Lace Vine is one of the fastest growing, drought-resistant and pest-free vines. Silver lace vine loves our hot summers and may grow to 12 feet the first year. It is covered with billows of white lacy flowers from August through September.

Honeysuckle Vines - we have **'Gold Net'**, with golden-veined leaves; **'Halls Japanese'**, with a sweet fragrance and white-yellow flowers; **'Goldflame'**, with bright yellow flowers; **'Cedar Lane'**, a prolific bloomer with red flowers; and **'Dropmore Scarlet'**, whose red blooms attract hummingbirds.

Some other wonderful vines for the garden are wisteria, jasmine and climbing hydrangea (see "Hydrangeas" at left). Take a trip to Behnke's — we have an especially nice collection this year.



Mandevilla vine

Black-Eyed Susan Bills

For every ten dollars you spend, you'll receive a Black-Eyed Susan Bill worth \$1.00. These Bills can be redeemed on our Black-Eyed Susan Days, July 20th and 21st. The Bills will be given out from Saturday, June 1st, through Saturday, July 20th, or until the supply is exhausted. **Black-Eyed Susan Days, July 20th and 21st.** Redeem your Black-Eyed Susan Bills this weekend, and take advantage of the many unadvertised specials in all departments.

Red, White & Blue Half Price Sale

Sunday, June 30th, Both Locations
Join us for our special sale day. All items, both plants and hardgoods, tagged with a Red, White & Blue sticker will be **HALF PRICE!** It's time for us to clean house — and you can reap the savings. Mark your calendars now!

Perennial Garden Vignettes

Our Perennial Department has designed some exceptional Garden Vignettes to help you with your garden plans. The Vignettes are composed of various perennials, shrubs, and sometimes even herbs, with a common theme. The plants are offered at a savings of 25% off the regular price for a two-week period. Watch our ad in

Thursday's
Washington Post for these specials.



New! Summer Activities

Perennial Garden Walks

Beltsville location. Join our Perennial Department staff for interesting and informative short strolls through our extensive perennial collection. The Garden Walks are free, but please call to pre-register: (301) 937-1100.

Weird & Wonderful Perennials

June 6, 6 - 7pm

An introduction to specialty perennials you won't find in just any garden.

Native Plants

June 20, 10 - 11am

Start an All American garden with hard-to-beat perennials & shrubs.

Using Ornamental Grasses

July 11, 6 - 7pm

Learn to use ornamental grasses to add art and architecture to your landscape.

Late Season Color

July 25, 10 - 11am

Usher fall in with a blaze of color with late-blooming perennials

Daylily Frolic

Largo location. Saturday, June 29, 9am - 1pm

Join us for a magical walk through our blooming daylily stock fields in Largo. Over 250 varieties — most of which are available for 1996 and a few which are under evaluation. Vote for your favorites. At 1 pm we'll hold a drawing and the winner will receive a newly introduced daylily.

Tomato Tasting Festival

Beltsville location — Saturday, August 17, 12 noon - 4pm

Largo location — Sunday, August 18, 12 noon - 4pm

Join us for a fun experience. We're growing a bumper crop of tomatoes and peppers. Taste the old favorites and new varieties we think are best for this area.

Landscape Design on the Computer

Beltsville location. Saturday, August 24, 10am - 2pm

Computer-aided design demonstration. We plan to have time to actually do a few projects while you wait, so bring photos of an area you'd like to have landscaped.

New! Herbal Workshops

Beltsville location. Tom Smith, one of our herb experts, will conduct these hands-on workshops. Learn, have fun, and take your herbal delight home with you. Tuition of \$15 per 3-hour session includes all materials to complete the projects outlined. Pre-registration required. Please call (301) 937-1100.

Herbal Tea Gardens

Saturday, June 29 — 2 sessions, 3 hours each: 9am - 12 noon & 1 - 4 pm

Participants will be introduced, through lecture and demonstration, to a variety of plants and herbs that can be used to create an Herbal Tea Garden. Selection criteria, drying of the leaves, and creating tea blends will be demonstrated and participants will make 12 tea bags for their own use.

Herb Vinegars & Oils

Saturday, July 13 — 2 sessions, 3 hours each: 9am - 12 noon & 1 - 4 pm

Learn about herbs and vegetables that can be used to create unique blends of oils and vinegars for culinary use. You'll discover how to blend your own oils and vinegars. Tuition includes all materials for one oil and one vinegar.

Herbal Bath Products

Saturday, July 20, — 2 sessions, 3 hours each:

9am - 12 noon & 1 - 4 pm

Learn about bath oils, fragrances and salts that can be made with various herbs and oils. Tom will demonstrate how to blend and create your own bath oil, bath bag, bath salt and fragrance.



Behnke's Gardening Tips

June

Father's Day is June 16th. Check out the Garden Helpers on page one for gift ideas. If you're still undecided, consider a *Behnke Gift Certificate*.

Inspect the garden periodically for evidence of insects or disease. Look for lacebugs on azaleas, spider mites on evergreens and annuals, bagworms on arborvitae, and Japanese beetles on roses and annuals. When the hot weather hits, keep a close eye on roses and lilacs for signs of disease.

If there is not sufficient rainfall, provide your lawn with one inch of water per week during summer and through the fall. If necessary, you may apply a weed killer to control broadleaf weeds such as dandelions and clover.

Plants in pots, hanging baskets, windowboxes, and other containers will need frequent, probably daily, waterings. To prevent root-rot, make sure to empty saucers so that the plants do not stand in water.

Pick up a copy of **Water Gardening** in our Aquatics Department. This new magazine is full of inspiring photographs and excellent information on garden ponds, water lilies and other water plants, and ornamental fish.

July

When watering vegetable gardens, it's best to water less frequently (about once or twice a week), and water *deeply*. This practice will encourage plants to develop deep root systems which stay in contact with a constant supply of moisture deep in the soil. Frequent light waterings encourage shallow root systems because the roots will concentrate where

the water is — the first few inches of soil. These plants are the first to dry out and wilt, resulting in stress which weakens the plants. Stressed plants perform poorly, and are more inclined to suffer from insects and disease.

Remove spent blossoms and seed pods from perennials. This process, known as deadheading, will prolong the bloom period of flowering perennials, and in some cases, will result in a second flush of blooms later in the season.

Deadheading annuals will help to keep them in full bloom all summer long. Especially overgrown or leggy plants may need to be sheared back to about half their height, and fertilized with 5-10-5. Although you will sacrifice a couple of week's worth of blooms, the payoff comes later in the season, when the annuals come back, fuller and better than ever.

August

At Behnke's this month, you'll find market packs of ready-to-plant cool season vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, and kale.

Keep the birds happy with a birdbath or other water source. They'll stick around and eat insects that are feeding on your garden!

Excess basil in the garden? Freeze whole leaves in airtight bags. And of course, basil dries beautifully and keeps indefinitely. On a sunny day cut a few branches of basil and tie them into a bunch with a rubber band. Hang the bunch upside down in a cool, dry place, out of direct light. When dry crumble the leaves and store in an airtight jar.

Keep a Garden Journal

Not only is it enjoyable to look back on yesterday's garden (especially if you include photos), but your journal will prove to be a valuable resource. Record which varieties you've planted and how well each one performed in your garden. Make weekly notes of what comes into bloom - it's an invaluable resource when you're planning garden additions. Paste in Behnke handouts pertaining to your plants so you'll remember when to fertilize, prune, etc. Note what measures you have taken to control certain pests, and the degree of success attained. Perhaps better still, a garden journal is a place to keep seed catalogs, newspaper clippings and magazine articles, and a place to plan, sketch, hope....and dream.

1996

Call Behnke's for more information: (301) 937-1100

Penstemons for Pleasure

Some of the loveliest and most underrated of our North American native plants are penstemons, prized not only for their flowers, but also for their long season of bloom. Most of these colorful species are great for early summer bloom. They grow best in organic, well-drained soil in full sun.

Penstemon digitalis 'Husker Red' is the 1996 Perennial Plant of the Year. This great performer, which tolerates heat and humidity, has lovely bronze-red foliage. The dark basal rosette produces 3-foot-tall spikes topped by white, tubular flowers in late spring. The combination of dark foliage and light flowers is very effective. 'Husker Red' is particularly striking combined with *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam' (threadleaf coreopsis) or *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue'.

Penstemon 'Garnet' is a robust plant with lovely, fresh green leaves and attractive spikes of dark port wine flowers on 18-inch stems. The flowers cover the plant in late spring and then continue to bloom sporadically throughout the rest of the summer.

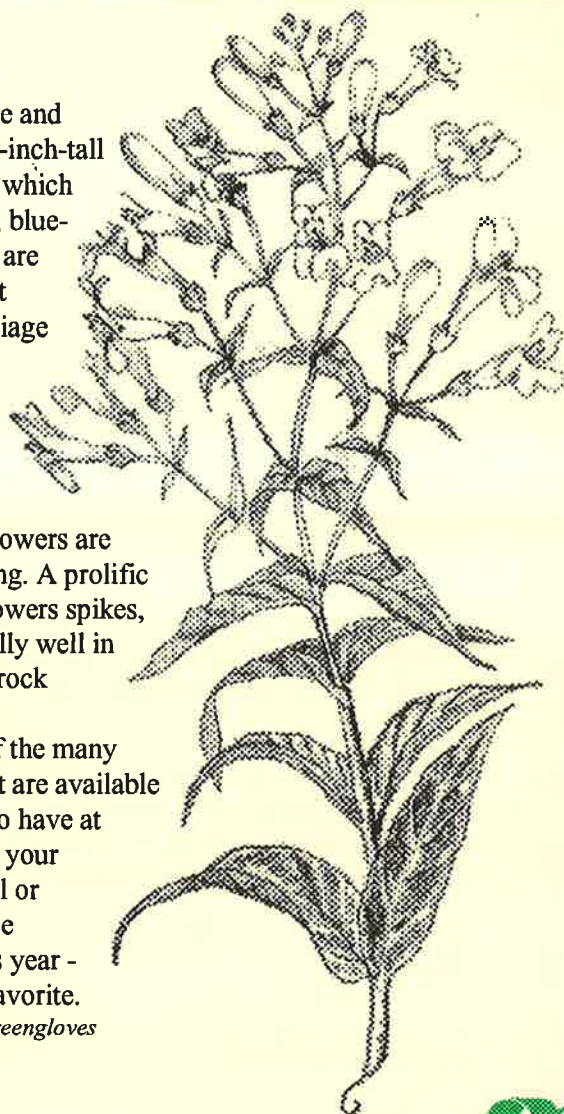
Penstemon 'Sour Grapes' looks almost

good enough to eat. In June and July the plant produces 24-inch-tall stems with flower clusters which resemble bunches of juicy, blue-violet grapes. The flowers are so large and numerous that they nearly obscure the foliage from view.

Although only 12 inches tall, don't be fooled by the diminutive size of 'Elfin Pink'. The lovely soft-pink, tubular flowers are enchanting and eye-catching. A prolific bloomer with dozens of flowers spikes, 'Elfin Pink' works especially well in front of the border or in a rock garden.

These are only a few of the many varieties of penstemon that are available at Behnke's. We're sure to have at least one that will liven up your garden, whether it's formal or informal. Try some of these outstanding perennials this year - they're sure to become a favorite.

— Gertrude Greengloves



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