

Confessions of a Tomato Lover

— by Melodie Likel, Perennial Specialist, Beltsville

It started innocently enough, a tomato plant or two in pots on the balcony of my garden apartment. Then later, as I married and moved to a house, I filled a small, sunny garden with tomatoes, beans, cucumbers and herbs. Here I had found a satisfying outlet for desires which had developed deep within me as a child working with my father in his vegetable patch. Unfortunately, as surrounding trees and shade encroached, no space was left for a vegetable garden, so I gave up and drove to farm stands and farmers' markets for my fresh vegetables.

During a casual search for a new home, my husband and I discovered a sunny, 2-acre lot with a small Cape Cod house. I now had a large vegetable plot in full sun, and the stage was set for the obsession to really take hold.

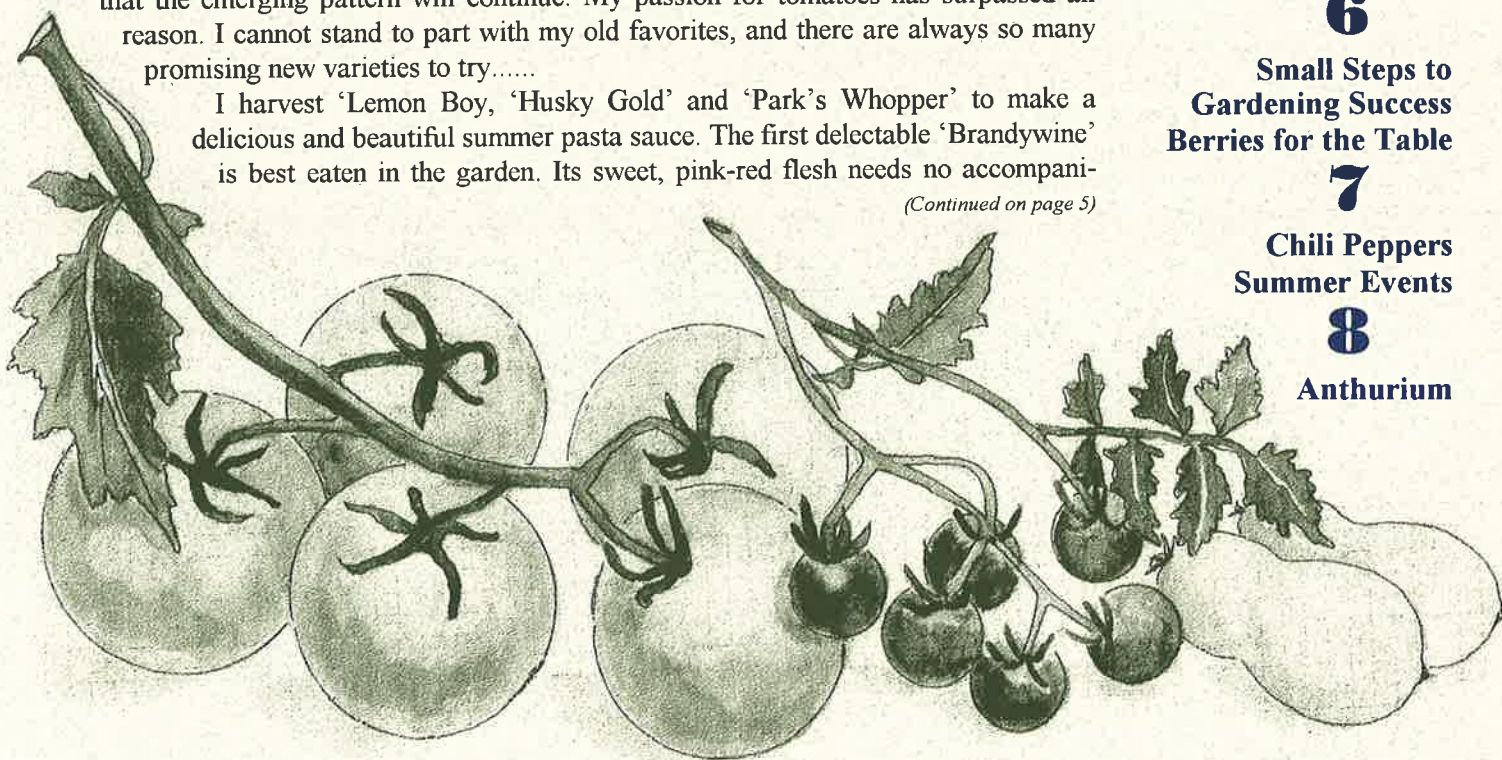
For a year or two we harvested corn, beans, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, melons and tomatoes. It happened gradually.... the desire to have more and more tomatoes. While shopping for seedlings, I always felt compelled to try several new varieties.

Along with my tomato mania, or perhaps because of it, I was also developing a love of cooking and an appreciation of fresh ingredients. These only increased my desire to have a cornucopia of fresh tomatoes in the garden. Last year my vegetable garden, which is large enough to supply a family of four with plenty of vegetables of all kinds, contained 38 tomato plants, a row of leeks (they don't take up much room) and some basic herbs.

One might expect that I would exercise some restraint when planting this year but I fear that the emerging pattern will continue. My passion for tomatoes has surpassed all reason. I cannot stand to part with my old favorites, and there are always so many promising new varieties to try.....

I harvest 'Lemon Boy', 'Husky Gold' and 'Park's Whopper' to make a delicious and beautiful summer pasta sauce. The first delectable 'Brandywine' is best eaten in the garden. Its sweet, pink-red flesh needs no accompani-

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Meet: Randy Best



Randy Best, the Perennial Plant Buyer for Behnke Nurseries, is affectionately known as "Mr. Hosta." He is constantly searching for truly unique varieties of hosta to carry here at the nursery. This passion has compelled him to bring in over 100 varieties to be added to our already-great selection of this shade-loving perennial. His love of quality garden plants is evident to anyone who has had the opportunity to talk with him about garden design.

Randy started at Behnkes in 1989, and has worked in both the Woody Plant and the Perennial Departments, giving him a broad range of experience and knowledge in both areas.

A native Texan (see the article to the right), Randy has lived in Maryland since 1973. He lives in College Park with his wife Lynn, and their two children, Candy-Lynn and Randall. He spends much of his free time designing and tending his gardens and hybridizing hostas and daylilies.

Randy is incessantly evaluating many of his hybridized seedlings and we expect that he will eventually introduce a spectacular new variety. ☺

Generations

—by Randy Best, Perennial Buyer, Beltsville

Everyone needs a mentor. Someone who takes you under his wing and shares his life's experiences. I thought I had no mentor, I was a self made man. But this morning, the dawn of a beautiful spring day, as I was puttering around the yard admiring my handiwork, all at once it came to me. Nothing I treasure would be here if someone hadn't taught me to appreciate this beauty. There would be no great drifts of daffodils, no masses of daylilies emerging from the ground with their promise of shocking orange blossoms. The quiet splendor of hosta in the shade would go unheeded, unobserved. I wouldn't know of or care about such things if those caretakers of the land who shared their knowledge and passion of gardening with me had not touched my life.

Looking back, it seems there were many — but I owe the greatest debt to three wonderful people: my grandparents, R.L. and Alcic, and my very good friend, who just happened to be my mother-in-law, Rachel.

In the days of my youth, the whole clan would come together at the old homestead of my grandparents in West Texas. On warm summer evenings, after a hard day's work of putting up peaches, jams and jellies, we'd pull up chairs under the grape arbor and listen to family tales.

A favorite story told about me at age 4 or 5 — I had been watching my granddad work in the garden and I wanted to plant something, too. He gave me a peach pit and we carefully selected a site and planted it. Low and behold, it sprouted! Granddad taught me how to care for my peach tree. Shortly afterwards, my family moved away. But every summer we'd come for a visit, and I would check on my tree. It certainly grew, as did I, and when I was in my teens, I remember my dad and his brother dragging out the extension ladder just to get those sweet fruits all the way in the top of my tree. When my granddad retired, he and my grandmother moved to East Texas. They took seed from my peach tree and planted it at their new home. And while none of the offspring quite gained the stature of the parent tree, they all produced the same luscious fruits — and I didn't miss my peach tree as much.

As I matured into young adulthood, I put my horticultural passions aside. It was definitely not "cool" for a man to be interested in plants and flowers. About that time my next great teacher came along — my mother-in-law Rachel. The first thing she taught me was that the double bridal wreath spirea in the backyard was from her mother, and I was not to touch it. She also taught me that true gardening style comes from finding your own point of view. The only person you must please is yourself. If you like orange marigolds, purple petunias and dusky pink roses all in one bed, then do it!

There was always something blooming in Rachel's garden. In spring, bulbs of all sorts shared the limelight with azaleas and gorgeous 40 year-old dogwood and redbud trees which she had transplanted from her childhood home. In summer, her flamboyant annual creations took center stage. And in fall the garden was ablaze in warm, simmering shades of red, burgundy, yellow and bronze.

In those days I was relegated to the backyard because, in her words, "You just don't have the flair for color that I have." I came a long way under her gentle tutelage, and eventually, years later, she finally did trust me enough to let me prune her mother's bridal wreath spirea — under very close supervision, of course.

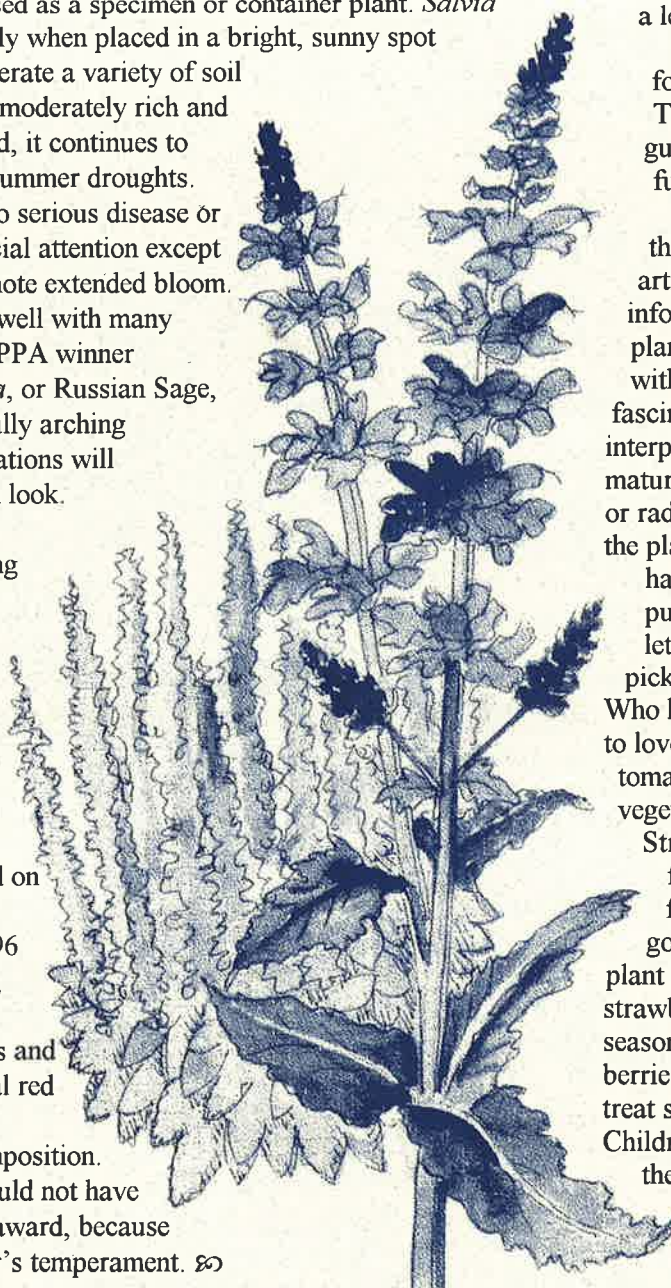
Sad to say, my mentors are all gone now. Of course, my memories will be with me always, along with all the wonderful things I learned from my grandparents and Rachel. And I can think of no finer tribute than to share the wealth of knowledge I inherited from them. I enjoy teaching my children, and I am proud to work for Behnke Nurseries — an institution that has passed on the gardening passion for three generations. ☺

Salvia 'May Night' ('Mainacht')

— by Randy Best, Perennial Buyer

The Perennial Plant Association (PPA) proclaims a sensational sage, *Salvia* 'May Night,' as "The 1997 Perennial Plant of the Year!" Bred and introduced in 1956 by the famous German plantsman and philosopher, Karl Foerster, this spectacular hybrid has the typical square stems of mints and a deliciously fragrant foliage. The slightly gray-green, toothed leaves provide a dramatic backdrop to the gorgeous floral display. This gem sits apart from all of its plainer cousins. The florets are borne on upright spiky inflorescences which are a rich indigo-black, and each floret is outlined in delicate violet-purple bracts. When mature, this plant will be 2-2½ feet tall with approximately the same spread. 'May Night' flowers in early summer, and the bloom time extends well into July. It is perfect for the middle of the perennial border and absolutely sensational when used as a specimen or container plant. *Salvia* 'May Night' will perform splendidly when placed in a bright, sunny spot in your perennial border. It will tolerate a variety of soil conditions, but thrives when given moderately rich and well-drained soils. Once established, it continues to thrive even during our short-term summer droughts. *Salvia* 'May Night' suffers from no serious disease or pest problems and requires no special attention except an occasional deadheading to promote extended bloom.

Salvia 'May Night' combines well with many garden perennials, such as former PPA winner *Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam'; *Perovskia*, or Russian Sage, *Rudbeckia* of all sorts, and gracefully arching ornamental grasses. These combinations will give you that lovely cottage garden look. But for those who are more adventuresome, a combination using the warm, brilliant corals of *Penstemon* 'Elfin Pink' and the understated majesty of daylily 'Satin Silk' toned down slightly with some cool grays of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' or *Stachys byzantina*, will give a strong contemporary look to any garden. *Salvia* 'May Night' will even stand on its own when used with brilliant crimsons and reds, such as our 1996 Largo Daylily Walk award winner, daylily 'Baltic Amber,' or other spectacular red-flowered perennials and annuals. Even its cousin, the annual red salvia (scarlet sage), will make a spectacular contribution to the composition. In this writer's opinion the PPA could not have selected a better perennial for this award, because truly this is a star — without a star's temperament. ☺



Gardening with Children

— by Judith Conway, Advertising

There are few activities that can instill the kind of pride in a child that gardening can. The acts of planting the seeds, or transplanting a seedling, then nurturing it and watching it grow until it is ready to be harvested and shared with the family make wonderful memories for years to come. The rewards of nurturing a plant are a lesson worth learning.

Here are some quick ideas for young gardeners to try.

They're easy enough to almost guarantee success, and actually fun for gardeners of all ages.

Try 'Red Robin' tomato this year. (See the tomato article on page 1 for more information.) Let the children plant a window box or planter with one or two of these fascinating tomatoes, then interplant with herbs or fast-maturing vegetables such as lettuce or radishes. Let the children water the plants, fertilize as needed, then harvest the results. They'll love pulling up the radishes and lettuce and will feel important picking the red, ripe tomatoes. Who knows, they might just learn to love the taste of sun-ripened tomatoes and fresh garden vegetables.

Strawberry jars seem old-fashioned — but just try one for the fun of it! Fill it with a good quality potting soil, then plant it with everbearing strawberries (ones that produce all season). A large jar will provide berries for your breakfast or dinner treat several times per week.

Children love to pick them and pop them into their mouths, and you'll know that the fresh berries harbor no danger of germs or insecticides. ☺



Vining Annual Flowers

— by Jill Gonzalez and Eric Morrison, Annuals Department, Beltsville

Flowering vines, planted in a sunny spot, will grow vigorously and bloom profusely all summer. Some of them will reach a full twenty feet in one season. They can add vertical height in the garden, balcony or patio and are great for covering trellises, fences or lattice with masses of fresh color amidst the cool, green foliage. Plant an annual vine or two this year, and enjoy relaxing behind a veil of cool greenery and fragrant summer flowers — they'll screen you from the day's noise, heat and troubles.

The **Mandevilla Vine** is like having Carmen Miranda and Bette Midler rolled into one! Eye-catching hot pink or white trumpet flowers with large, dark green, oval leaves and a vigorous growth rate make this a knock-out for deck or patio. It loves a hot, sunny spot and is drought tolerant.

Firecracker Vine vies for attention with the mandevilla. It has tubular flowers on spikes that change from soft lemon-yellow to orange to rusty red as they mature, hence its common name.

Moonflower vine is a magical vine whose huge, white, trumpet-shaped flowers begin to swirl open at dusk, releasing their fragrance. Plant moonflower with **Morning Glory**. As the plants grow they'll become intertwined and children and adults alike will be amazed at the transformation of the pale blue flowers of the morning glory vine (which opens at dawn and closes mid-afternoon) into the large white blooms of the moonflower.

Sweet Pea Vine has been a staple in cottage gardens for hundreds of years. They bloom in a wide palette of pleasing pastels. Pale green tendrils arch gracefully through the summer air, adding a dainty contrast to their gray-green leaves. The flowers are excellent for old-fashioned bouquets.

Among our many unusual flowering vines:

Cardinal Climber has feathery green foliage and bright red, morning glory-like flowers that stay open all day.

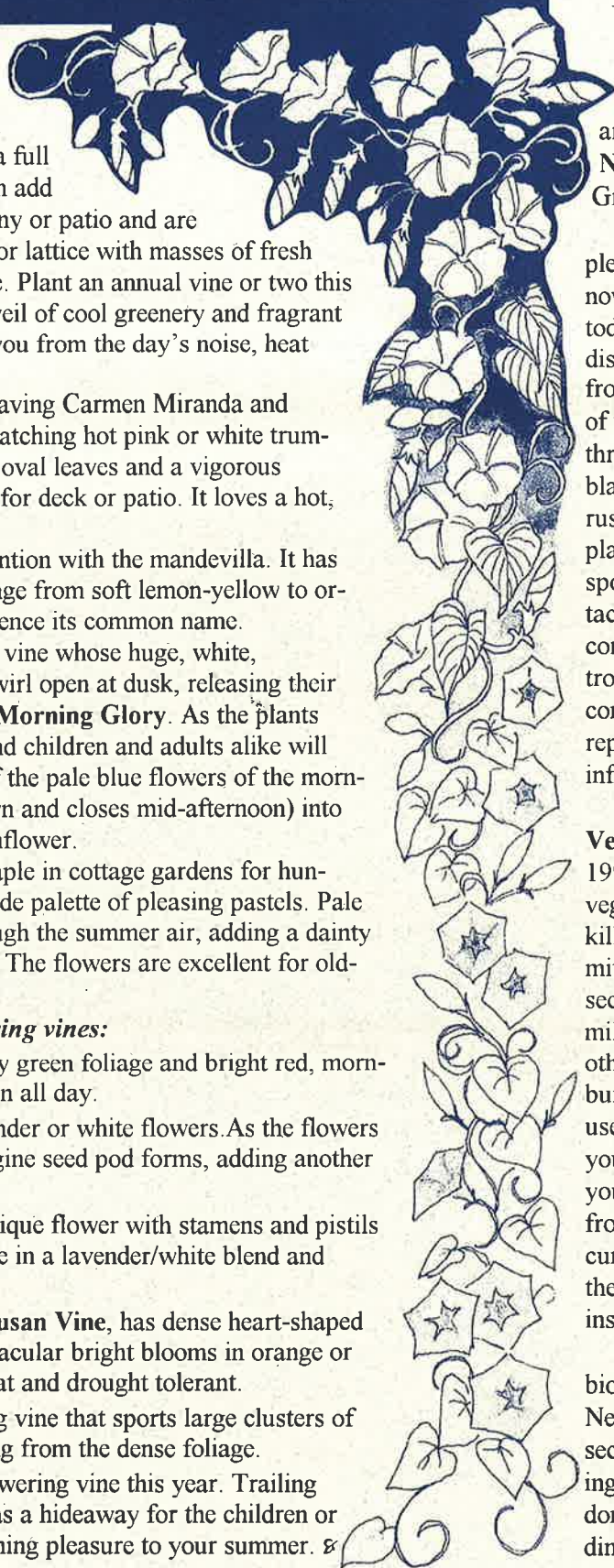
Hyacinth Bean Vine has lavender or white flowers. As the flowers fade, an impressive six inch aubergine seed pod forms, adding another dimension to the visual interest.

Passion Flower Vine has a unique flower with stamens and pistils borne on a single stamen. Available in a lavender/white blend and stunning crimson.

Thunbergia, or **Black-eyed Susan Vine**, has dense heart-shaped foliage with an abundance of spectacular bright blooms in orange or white, both with dark eyes. It is heat and drought tolerant.

Potato Vine is a fast-spreading vine that sports large clusters of dainty star-shaped flowers emerging from the dense foliage.

Treat yourself to an annual flowering vine this year. Trailing up the mailbox stand or trellis, or as a hideaway for the children or yourself, it will add carefree gardening pleasure to your summer. ☼



Weed This

— by Helen Gardiner, Manager, Behnke Nurseries' Garden Shop

Two of my favorite products are **Rose Defense** and **Fruit, Nut & Vegetable Spray** by Green Light.

Rose Defense is a completely organic product that is now available to control many of today's toughest insect, mite and disease problems. It is made from true Neem Oil, the extract of the Neem seed. It controls the three major rose diseases: blackspot, powdery mildew and rust. It does this by coating the plant and preventing the fungal spores from entering. It also attacks existing fungus for quick control. As an insecticide it controls pests by killing them on contact, and it acts as a natural repellent against future insect infestations.

Green Light's Fruit, Nut & Vegetable Spray is new for 1997. It can be safely used on vegetables, fruits, and herbs to kill aphids, whiteflies, spider mites, scale and many other insect pests. It controls powdery mildew, rust, anthracnose and other diseases as well. It will not burn your plants, even when used on young leaves. Try it on your vegetables this year — you'll reap a greater harvest from your tomatoes, squash, cucumbers and other vegetables if they aren't being eaten alive by insects and fungus.

Both products are biodegradable and non-toxic. Neither will harm beneficial insects, such as ladybugs or praying mantis, because those insects don't eat leaves — they prefer to dine on other insects. ☼

Tomato addict *(continued from page 1)*

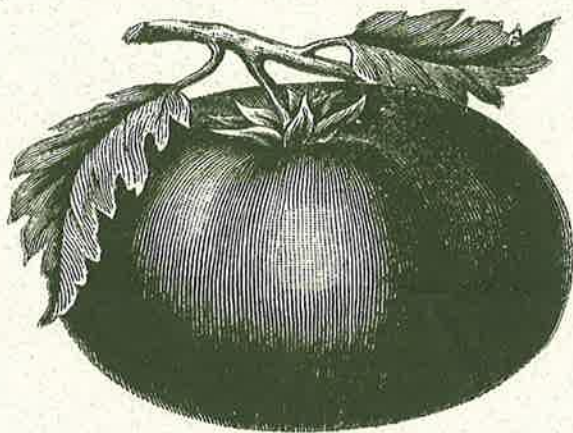
ment. The late-maturing 'Mr. Striped' is well worth the wait. The huge, light yellow fruits striped with pink are low acid and flavorful. 'Viva Italia' is my current favorite plum tomato (but then I'm fickle). The large, bright red, pear-shaped fruits are meaty and make great sauces. I always freeze plenty for winter use.

Any sane gardener knows that one cherry tomato plant is more than enough. I plant at least 6. Tiny, sugary-sweet 'Super Sweet 100's' make tasty garden snacks for gardeners of all ages. I harvest some to combine with the heirloom 'Yellow Pear' and the bite-sized 'Sungold' for a colorful summer salad. Cherry and small pear tomatoes make a delicious baked gratin when tossed with French bread, Parmesan cheese, parsley, olive oil and garlic (see the March 1996 issue of GardeNews for the recipe). I freeze some smaller tomatoes to bring a summer taste to winter meals.

Once the garden is full, I forge on undaunted, growing various dwarf or compact varieties in large pots. 'Heartland' performs especially well and produces all summer long. The 'Husky' series also makes excellent patio or deck plants with standard or cherry-sized fruits. These varieties are perfect salad tomatoes. Arrange slices of the rich red 'Heartland' with slices of 'Husky Gold' and fresh mozzarella and basil. Drizzle with olive oil and red wine vinegar.

'Red Robin' is a diminutive plant merely 12 inches tall which bears tiny, beefsteak-shaped fruits. It can even be grown indoors on a sunny windowsill. I grow this one just for the fun of it.

With each new season I vow moderation but year after year the promise of dark green plants heavy with flavorful fruits beguiles me, and my best laid plans are abandoned. This year, who knows, maybe 50 plants? Let's see — I could always dig up the driveway.....



Note:

If you're a tomato lover, or simply curious about what makes others rave about really fresh tomatoes, plan to attend our **Second Annual Tomato Taste-Off** this year. We'll have freshly picked, organically-grown tomato and pepper varieties for you to taste. The event will be held Saturday, August 23rd at Beltsville, and Sunday, August 24th at Largo. (Last year several customers attended both events — there are plenty of serious tomato lovers out there!)

We'd also like to solicit your recipes for our Tomato Taste-Off brochure. Last year's brochure included some really great summer salad recipes, as well as a winning tomato tart recipe. Do you have a recipe to share? Please call, write or E-mail, we'd love to hear from you. ☺

Garden Recipes

I use 'Lemon Boy,' 'Husky Gold,' and 'Park's Whopper' to make this sauce, but other varieties will do as long as you use at least 2 colors.

Simply Delicious Summer Pasta Sauce with Linguini

- 1 lb. linguini
- 10 to 12 medium-sized tomatoes in at least 2 different colors
- 3 to 4 Tbsp virgin olive oil
- salt and pepper, to taste
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped

Cook pasta until al dente. While the pasta cooks, cut the tomatoes into 1 inch pieces. Heat oil in a large skillet until warm. Add tomatoes, salt, and freshly-ground pepper, and basil leaves. Heat until just warmed through. Do not boil. Pour over drained pasta and enjoy the taste of summer! *Serves six.* ☺

Golden Tomato Tart

- 1 refrigerated pie crust, baked and cooled
- 4 to 5 gold tomatoes, sliced
- 6 to 7 gold cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh chives, minced
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 1 cup soft goat cheese (or cream cheese)
- 3 to 4 Tbsp cream (or milk)
- 1 Tbsp fresh rosemary, minced
- salt and pepper to taste

Mix the olive oil, garlic, parsley, chives and pepper. Pour over tomatoes and marinate for at least one hour. Drain tomatoes, reserve ¼ cup of marinade.

In a large bowl, stir cheese and cream until smooth. Add rosemary, salt and pepper. Spread cheese mixture into pie crust. Arrange tomato slices on top of cheese mix, overlapping and forming an attractive design. Chill. Just before serving, glaze the tomatoes with the reserved marinade. *Serves six.* ☺

Small Steps to Gardening Success

—by Behnke Staff

A little planning and a commitment to a small amount of time each week can make your garden look great all year long. It takes only a few minutes each day to do the jobs outlined here, but they will make a great difference in your gardening success.

☑ Walk around your garden every morning, if weather permits, before going to work or other activities. Besides giving you a pleasant way to start the day, you can do a little maintenance every day and hardly notice it. Carry a plastic pail to collect the weeds and debris — you'll keep things tidy with almost no effort.

☑ Use a labeled pre-emergent herbicide on your flower beds, then mulch to keep things neat and tidy. Used once every 8 weeks or so, a pre-emergent works like magic to keep new weeds from sprouting.

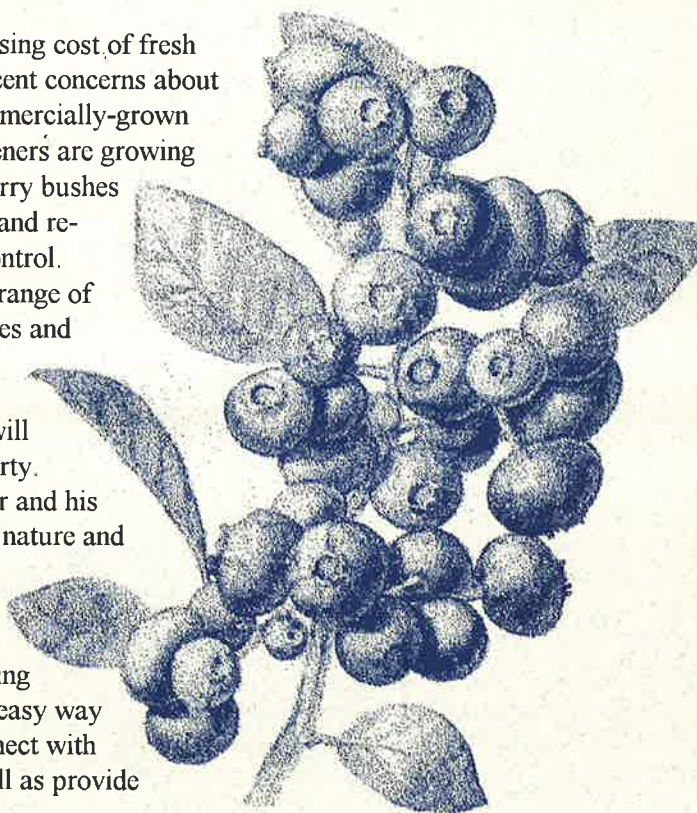
☑ Have a problem with moss? If the shady areas of your lawn or garden are being overtaken with moss, first burn it off with iron sulfate and/or **Moss Master®**. Once the moss is dead, rake it up and dispose of it. Then adjust the pH by adding lime. We prefer Solu-Lime because it is in solution and is quickly available to the soil. If the area is a lawn, the pH should be kept at 6-6.5.

☑ If your grass is thinning under the trees, it is probably because the tree roots are taking all the necessary nutrients and water. Reliant® Hard Fescue is a grass that will compete well with the tree roots. ☞

Fresh Berries for the Table

—by Helmut Jaehnigen, Director of Woody Plants, Beltsville

With the ever-increasing cost of fresh berries and the recent concerns about the quality of commercially-grown fruits, many gardeners are growing their own fruit and berries. Berry bushes are easy to grow and harvest, and require little care or chemical control. They are available in a broad range of interesting and attractive bushes and groundcovers and are long-lived and productive. As with any landscape addition, they will add to the value of your property. They also provide the gardener and his family with an involvement in nature and its ever-changing features. Many children have no connection with the process of growing their own food. Tending blueberry bushes provides an easy way for the young gardener to connect with the natural environment as well as provide fruit for their family.



Spring starts with the blueberry, a true native American plant. In March and April its delicate white flowers emerge, eventually becoming the blue fruit long cherished in June and July. Thornless and trouble-free, blueberry plants provide a bounty of sizes, shapes, fruiting seasons and an ever-changing appearance. The plants need no more than the care you give other plants in your landscape.

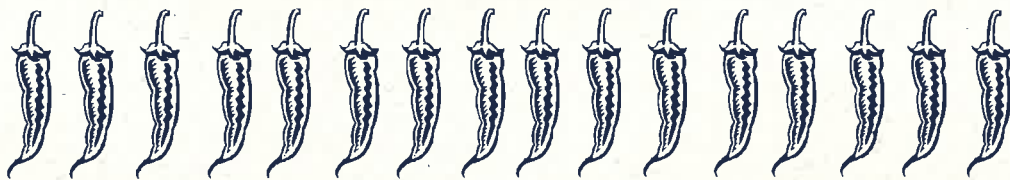
Blueberries are not difficult to grow, but the right start makes all the difference. Select container-grown plants which have an extensive root system that has been protected from drying out and is ready to start growing and producing fruit as soon as it is planted. If you choose early, mid and late-maturing plants, you can extend the harvest from late May until August!

Blueberries can be planted as early in the spring as the ground can be worked. They prefer loose, well-drained acidic soil. I till lots of peat moss into the soil for each plant before I plant it and locate the plants in full sun and well away from raspberries which could transmit diseases to them. I also provide a means of irrigating the plants because even a short dry spell can really set them back. I like to mulch them and bury a soaker hose under the mulch. A time-release fertilizer such as **Osmocote®** will supply a steady stream of nutrients, including needed trace elements. Compost or well-rotted manure is also an excellent fertilizer.

After harvesting the berries, put them in the fridge, where they'll keep for up to two weeks; or into the freezer, where they'll keep for several months. Wash them only immediately before you plan to eat them. Blueberries can also be successfully grown as container plants. The dwarf blueberry, 'Tophat,' at only 24 inches in height, is ideal for small yards or for a container. Imagine a Fourth of July party with a container of 'Tophat,' covered with blueberries, as the centerpiece. ☞

Chili Peppers Are Hot!

—by Peter A.F. Piper, Professional Pepper Picker, Ph.D.



Ohhhh, pepper! Chili peppers to be exact. The amazing fruit that can bring a glow to your cheeks and put a fire in your belly. Peppers have long been popular with gardeners around the world. Some people are so addicted to the fruits that they have acquired the nickname "chiliheads." But how did the chili pepper come to gain such popularity? Where did it come from?

Mom, where do chili peppers come from?

Chili peppers, perennial in the tropics but annual in our climate, belong to the Solanaceae family (which includes tomatoes and eggplants). They originated in the area where southern Brazil, eastern Bolivia and northern Paraguay come together. This region plays host to the greatest diversity of wild pepper species in the world. From this area, wild chili peppers have spread naturally by birds for centuries throughout Southern and Central America and on to what is now the Mexican-American border. Attracted by the brightly colored, mature berries, birds eat the berries and the seeds then pass through their digestive tract intact, become encased in fertilizer, and are deposited on the ground all primed and ready to start another plant. To this day, wild peppers are found in southern Arizona and Texas.

The Niña, the Pinta, and the Jalepeño

As the first Americans began to settle Central America, they discovered the wild chilies and found a great way to spice up their diets. By the time Columbus arrived, the native Americans had an extensive collection of chili peppers in their gardens.

The original, wild, red berries had already given way to domesticated varieties in different colors, shapes, and pungencies. And, because these first European explorers thought they were in the East Indies where black pepper, *Piper nigrum*, was grown, they named the chilies "peppers." The name has reigned ever since.

Cheap, easy to grow, and packing a lot of punch, chili peppers spread around the world as fast as traders could ship them. In fact, chili peppers were introduced and established in many countries so quickly that the first trained botanists exploring the world declared chili peppers to be indigenous everywhere.

Why are Chili Peppers Hot?

The "hot stuff" in chili peppers is known as capsaicin, named for the genus *Capsicum* to which chili peppers belong. The capsaicin is only found in the mature fruit of the plant and not in the stems or the leaves. The closer the fruit is to the stem, the hotter the pepper. The heat of a chili pepper is measured in Scoville units. On this scale, *hot* to most Americans may measure a few thousand Scoville units. But, for chili peppers, that is mild. For instance, the hot habañero measures approximately several hundred thousand units, and the hottest pepper measured is the red habañero at over 500,000 units. However, when mixed with food the heat dissipates.

Care should be exercised when handling the very hottest peppers. The capsaicin is oily and tends to linger not only on the taste buds but also on the skin. If allowed into a cut on the skin or behind a contact lens, it can be very painful. Remember to wash well with soap and water after handling chili peppers. ☺

Gardening Activities

Behnke Nurseries is proud to sponsor a variety of horticultural activities throughout the year. Upcoming events include:

☺ **Bonsai Auction** - Beltsville
Saturday, May 24, 10 - 12 noon

☺ **Container Gardening I**
Beltsville
Sunday, May 25, 10am

☺ **Hosta Show** - Beltsville
Saturday, May 31, 2 - 6pm
Sunday, June 1, 9 - 4pm

☺ **Twilight Tours**
Thursday evenings in June at 6pm
Join our specialists as they introduce you to some of their favorite plants.

☺ **Daylily Walk** - Largo
Saturday, June 28th, 10 - 1pm

Our trial fields are filled with blooming daylilies and we invite you to vote for your favorites. Largo location only.

☺ **Water Gardening** - Beltsville
Saturday, July 12, 10am

☺ **Container Gardening II** - Beltsville
Saturday, July 12, 10am

☺ **Tomato Taste-Off** - Beltsville
Saturday, Aug. 23rd, 11 - 2pm
Largo
Sunday, Aug. 24th, 11 - 2pm

☺ **Spring Flowering Bulbs Expo** - Beltsville
Saturday, Sept. 20, 10 - 4pm
A day of information and fun.

☺ **Herbal Workshops** - Beltsville
Weekends in August.
Please call for a schedule of our herbal workshops.

☺

For more information on these events, pick up a schedule of the seasons' activities at either location.

Anthurium — Honest, It's Real!

— by Susan O'Hara, Graphics

Plastic or just perfect? The Anthurium, or Flamingo Flower, is a low-maintenance, high performance plant that will lend an exotic air to anyone's home or office. Once valued only as a cut flower, the plant can now be grown in the house and the flowers enjoyed all year long.

Originally the anthurium was a large, gangly, tropical plant native to the rain forests of South America and grown commercially for the cut flower market. However, in the 1980's, new dwarf hybrids broke into the limelight and took interior landscapers by surprise. Here was a low-maintenance plant that could create high impact, tropical settings in offices, malls and restaurants. The public was in awe. They adored these near perfect, exotic little gems and started demanding them for their homes. The houseplant industry had a new star.

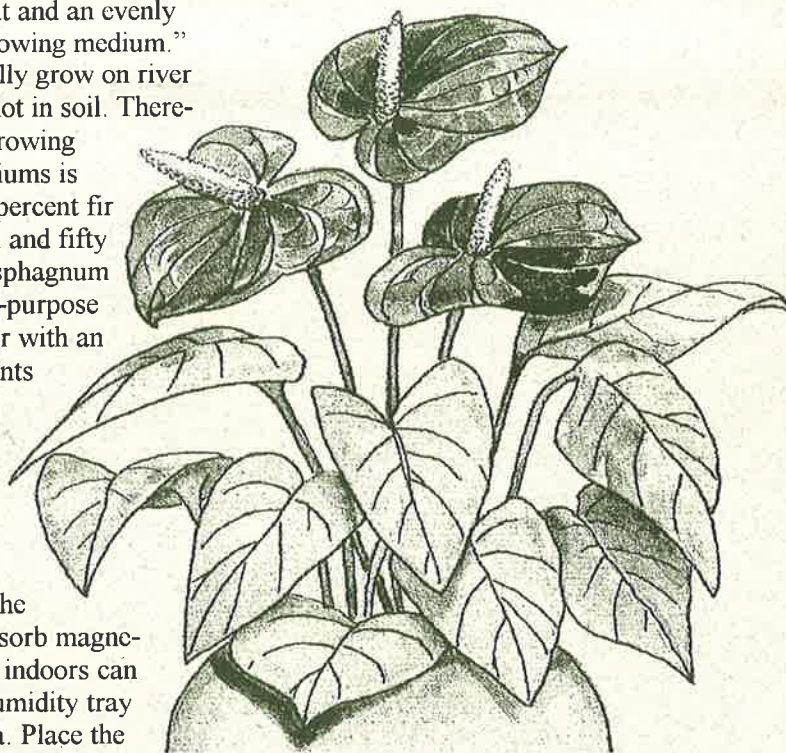
If you have ever grown an anthurium, you can understand why they are so popular. The foliage is dark, glossy, and heart-shaped, growing easily in relatively low light. The "flower", actually a modified leaf called a spathe (SPAYth), will grow in bright indirect light and is so shiny that it looks as though it were coated with lacquer.

Even better, under the right growing conditions, the plant will send up new flowers all year long, each lasting for weeks. Due to hybridization, anthurium flowers are available in shades of green, red, pink white, salmon, and lavender. There is a color to complement almost any home.

Anthuriums grow in the average home environment. They require a bright, indirect light and an evenly moist, not wet, "growing medium." Anthuriums naturally grow on river rocks or on trees, not in soil. Therefore a successful growing medium for anthuriums is comprised of fifty percent fir bark or potting soil and fifty percent long fiber sphagnum moss. Apply an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer with an even ratio of nutrients (such as Peters 20-20-20) every two weeks. Stay away from fertilizers with high nitrogen levels because they can interfere with the plants ability to absorb magnesium. Since the air indoors can tend to be dry, a humidity tray may be a good idea. Place the

plant on a tray or saucer filled with pebbles and pour water into the tray to just below the top of the pebbles. As the water evaporates it will increase the humidity around the plant.

If you want an exciting tropical plant that will provide not only striking foliage but intriguing, colorful blooms over a long period of time, get an anthurium — it's perfect!



Visit Behnke Nurseries on the World Wide Web: <http://www.behnke.com/behnkes>

See page 6
Fresh Berries for the Table.

Do Not Forward or Return — Address Cor.

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