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## An Exceptional Spring

— by Helmut Jaehnigen, Woody Plants Specialist

**M**other Nature smiled on us this year. Spring has come early and gently, with mild, sun-drenched days and plenty of rain. This is a rare gift, and we should take care to use it well. The window of suitable planting weather is open wide; and never has there been such a tremendous variety of excellent new plants to enrich our landscapes. Don't make any decisions until you visit Behnke's and see for yourself. Stroll among the blooms and abundant new growth and allow yourself to be swept away by the possibilities — here are just a few plants that might inspire you...

Roses are everybody's favorite, and new this spring is the 'Romantica' series from the House of Meiland. They have the look and richness of old roses and each of them has a deliciously potent fragrance.

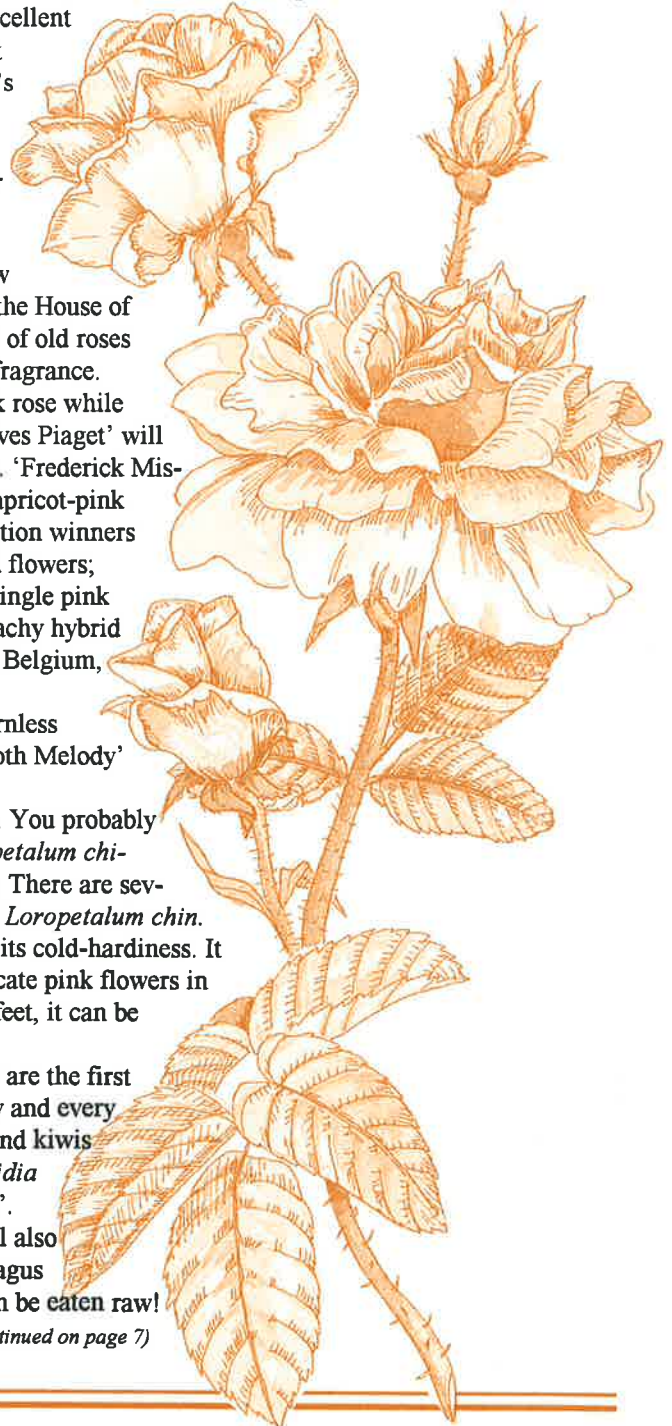
'Auguste Renoir' is a radiant deep pink rose while 'Toulouse Lautrec' is an intense yellow. 'Ives Piaget' will remind you of a beautiful huge pink peony. 'Frederick Mistral' is a hybrid tea with perfectly formed apricot-pink flowers. The 1998 All America Rose Selection winners are 'Opening Night', with long-lasting red flowers; 'Fame', a luminous pink; 'First Light', a single pink shrub rose; and 'Sunset Celebration', a peachy hybrid tea that has won gold and silver medals in Belgium, Holland, Ireland, Italy and New Zealand.

You will really appreciate our new thornless roses as cut flowers! The best one is 'Smooth Melody' a striking red and white two-tone.

Now let's move on to other new plants. You probably saw the first Chinese fringe flowers, *Loropetalum chinense*, with their delicate flowers last year. There are several new varieties available. My favorite is *Loropetalum chin.* 'Zhushou Fuchsia' which was selected for its cold-hardiness. It has gorgeous wine-colored leaves and delicate pink flowers in spring and fall. While it grows to over 10 feet, it can be maintained at 5 to 6 feet.

Now, plants for your taste buds! Just in are the first kiwi plants that are both proven cold hardy and every bit as big, juicy and tasty as the New Zealand kiwis you buy at the grocery store. Ask for *Actinidia* 'Summertime Boy' and 'Summertime Girl'. Both are available in limited supply. You'll also want to try the new 'Purple Passion' asparagus from Europe. It's so sweet and tender it can be eaten raw!

(Continued on page 7)





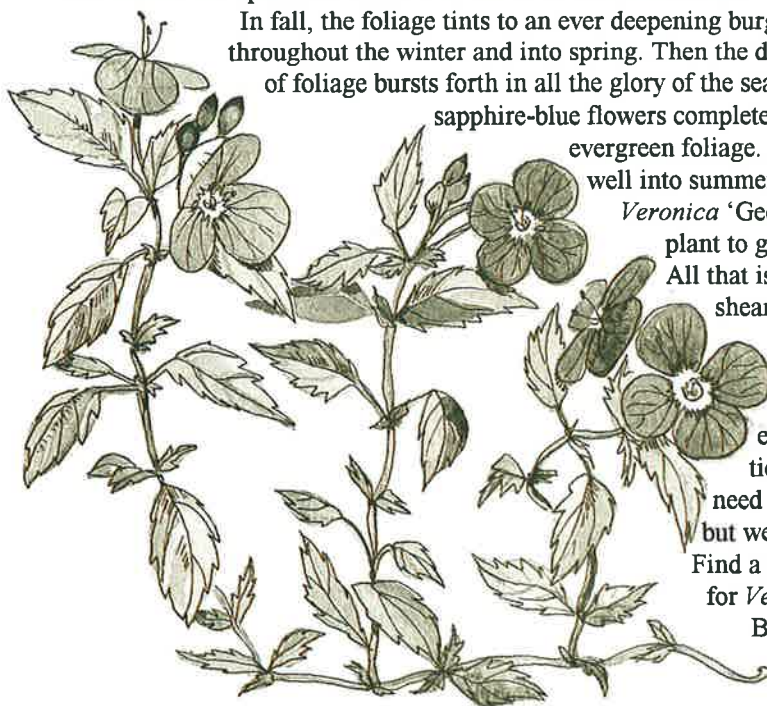
## Secret Veronica

— by Randy Best, Perennial Specialist

*G*eorgia, Georgia on my mind. No, not the land of cotton, Southern belles, and cotillions, but the former Soviet Georgia, land of civil war, political unrest and a really nasty climate. That's the native land of *Veronica* 'Georgia Blue', a wonderful perennial plant that provides interest in the garden all year long. Considering the tremendous variety of plants, perennial and otherwise, that we carry here at Behnke's, it is difficult to single out one that stands apart from the rest. *Veronica* 'Georgia Blue' surely fits the bill.

This veronica thrives in conditions that many other plants would sulk in. It will grow well in exposures that range from full sun to partial shade, and will negotiate clay soils as long as the soil drains well. The tight foliage mounds reach a height of 4 to 6 inches and spread to a maximum of 38 to 42 inches across.

In fall, the foliage tints to an ever deepening burgundy which lasts throughout the winter and into spring. Then the dense, rambling carpet of foliage bursts forth in all the glory of the season with deep sapphire-blue flowers completely obscuring the fine evergreen foliage. Blooming continues well into summer.



*Veronica* 'Georgia Blue' is an easy plant to grow and maintain.

All that is needed is a light shearing after flowering to restore it to its pristine condition.

I think this plant is an exceptional contribution to any garden in need of a rapidly spreading but well behaved resident.

Find a place in your garden for *Veronica* 'Georgia Blue.' It's beautiful, trouble-free and true blue. ☺

## Behnke Nurseries is now in Potomac!

After gardening with you for the past 65 plus years, we've now found a way to bring our beautiful plants, exquisite selection and quality gardening supplies closer to the homes and gardens of many of you. We recently purchased Potomac Nurseries, at 4595 River Road in Potomac, just 2.5 miles outside the Beltway on River Road. We took possession in February of this year, and have been making some major improvements to the parking, layout and the interior of the Main Garden Shop. You'll find many familiar faces there, as some of the Behnke experts from Beltsville and Largo have transferred to the Potomac location, and the staff at Potomac Nurseries has stayed on to join our ranks as well. We think you'll like the improvements, and know you'll appreciate having Behnke quality plants available closer to home.

We are also renovating the charming Victorian House and Greenhouse next to the Main Garden Shop and it will house a full-service Behnke Florist Shop, providing local as well as FTD and AFS delivery services. Our award-winning designers are excited about working in a unique Victorian atmosphere created by the many spacious, arching windows and ornate tin ceiling.

The Potomac Nursery telephone number is 301-983-9200, and the Florist Shop number will be 301-983-4400. Please come visit, we're proud of our new location!

## Meet: Alex Dencker



Alex took over the position of Store Manager of our new Potomac location in February 1998. He is a Certified Maryland Horticulturist who has extensive experience in both production and management at The Behnke Nurseries Company.

Alex started working for Behnke's in May 1987, in Beltsville, while getting a degree in Political Science from the University of Maryland. In May of 1988 Albert Behnke selected Alex to be Head Gardener at his Burtonsville home. Alex maintained Mr. Behnke's gardens until 1993 when he transferred to the Perennial Department at our Largo Production Facility. He was responsible for the maintenance of Behnke Nurseries' extensive perennial collection. In 1996 he assumed day-to-day leadership of the Retail Nursery operations at Largo.

Alex brings with him Mr. Behnke's expectations that Behnke Nurseries will offer only the highest quality plants and the highest standards of customer service and information to our customers.

Alex is married to Leigh, the Senior Special Events Coordinator at the Kennedy Center, and they are expecting their first child in May.

His hobbies include hiking, backpacking and gardening at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. ☺



## Iris Reigns in Spring and Fall

— by Randy Best, Perennial Specialist

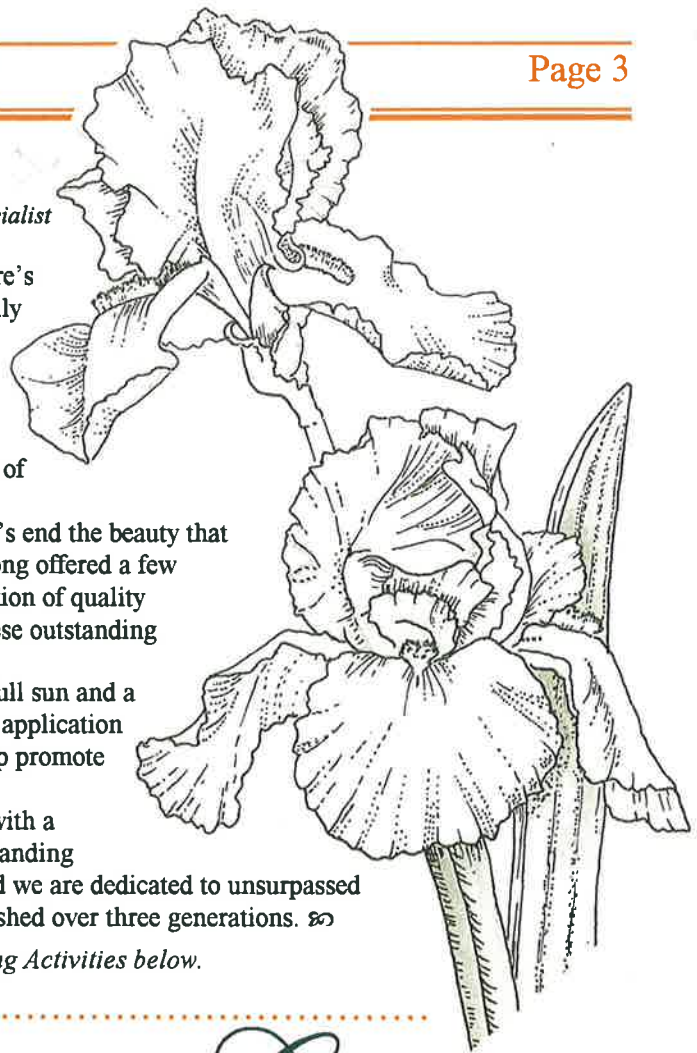
**T**he blooming season of iris has long been equated with nature's eternal rite of spring. Just as we trust the days will grow steadily longer and gradually warmer, we know our beloved iris will keep the faith — gracing our gardens in a tapestry of colors and scents. Many devotees consider the iris to be the queen of the spring garden. That's quite an honor, to be sure, but hardly surprising when one beholds her in the border — tall, elegant, dignified, and bearing blossoms of every hue, particularly the royal shades of purple.

With the new reblooming varieties, it's possible to recapture at season's end the beauty that iris lends our gardens in the spring. Behnke's Perennial Department has long offered a few varieties of reblooming iris, but this year we will bring you the finest selection of quality reblooming varieties available today. In fact, until recently a number of these outstanding varieties were only available to collectors.

Reblooming iris grow under the same conditions as single bloomers: full sun and a well-drained, alkaline soil. The rebloomers will benefit from an additional application of fertilizer after the spring bloom (Plant-Tone® or Garden-Tone®) to help promote an abundance of fall flowers.

For further information, stop by one of our three locations and speak with a member of our trained staff about reblooming iris or any of our many outstanding perennials. At Behnke Nurseries, we guarantee your gardening success and we are dedicated to unsurpassed quality, amazing selection, and uncompromising service, standards established over three generations. ❧

*Iris enthusiasts will enjoy the Median Iris Show at Behnke's. See Gardening Activities below.*



## Limited Edition "Garden Treasures" T-Shirts — Only at Behnke's!

**W**e are pleased to announce the first in a series of limited edition T-shirts made exclusively for Behnke Nurseries. We have worked with the company that designs and prints high-quality shirts for the Washington Opera, New York Botanical Gardens, Kennedy Center and Smithsonian. The T-shirt is 100% heavy cotton, screen-printed and embroidered with a beautiful casual arrangement of floral garden treasures, including black-eyed susans, columbines, violas, daylilies,



ferns and cosmos. The design is screen printed in a Victorian linotype manner in deep forest green on white, and is highlighted by richly colored embroidery on selected flowers. And the Behnke Boy logo is hidden in the design! This T-shirt is the first in a seasonal line-up of designs, with the next design planned for early fall. We hope you'll like it as much as we do. The shirts will be available April 6th, 1998, in all three Behnke locations. We suspect they won't last long! Don't wait till they're all gone! ❧

## Gardening Activities

We sponsor interesting and timely gardening events throughout the year, and we are happy to lend space to organizations wishing to showcase exhibits that are of interest to our customers.

### Berry Bushes and Fruit Trees

*Saturday, April 4th, 1998, 10 am to 4 pm*  
Jane Warner of Virginia Berry Farm and Terry Freed of Stark Bros. will be here to answer questions and give advice on various varieties of fruit trees and berry bushes for the home gardener.

### Median Iris Show

*Saturday, April 25th, 1998, Noon to 4:30*  
Here's an opportunity to see choice specimens of these remarkable beauties.  
*Sponsored by the Chesapeake & Potomac Iris Soc.*

### Bonsai Society Show & Auction

*Saturday, May 23rd, 1998, Noon*  
(22nd Annual) Peruse the collection or purchase your own living heirloom.  
*Sponsored by the Potomac Bonsai Association*



## So Many Tomatoes, So Little Thyme....

—by Melodie Likel, Potomac Perennial Specialist

Last year I grew 26 varieties of tomatoes! Fifty-six plants! My mania for tomatoes resides not only in my love of fresh, wholesome food but in the wonder of planting a single seed and nurturing the plant that bears this marvelous fruit. The amazing cycle of life never fails to astonish me and with each approaching spring, I eagerly await the planting of my tomato seeds with their promise of summer bounty.

When planning my garden, I always include some promising new varieties along with the old familiar favorites. I must, as seasoned and disciplined gardeners do, review last year's garden notes and recall the successes and disappointments of the summer past.

Perusing my gardening journal, I can almost taste the unbelievable sweetness of the cherry-sized 'Sungold' — the sweetest tomato I have ever eaten. This year I will plant several and use the golden fruit in favorite recipes.

I always grow an assortment of cherry tomatoes to toss in salads. The heirloom 'Yellow Pear', with its bright sunny color and diminutive size, is unequalled. It is prolific and produces into the cool days of fall. I was intrigued by 'Red Currant' which claimed to produce tomatoes the size of peas! Well, this was no exaggeration — the 7-foot tall plant bore thousands of tiny, bright red fruits, only slightly larger than an English pea!

Who could resist a tomato called 'Green Grape'? The 2-3 foot plants bore lots of plump, sweet, yellow-green, 1½ inch fruits.

Sometimes a name alone is enough to sell a plant. I bought 'Santa' in spite of the incongruous images it brought to mind. (A colossal beefsteak variety?) Not gigantic, round, rosy-red fruits but small, 1-1½ inch oval orange-red tomatoes with a satisfying snap when bitten and a wonderfully sweet flesh. Another winner to add to my growing list of small tomatoes I can not be without.

Then of course there must be tomatoes to make sauces and paste. After growing a number of different plum tomatoes, I always come back to 'Viva Italia'. The

short, bushy plants are determinate and can be pulled out once all the fruit has been harvested. A nice feature if you should want to plant cool weather crops like kale or broccoli for fall harvest. 'Viva Italia' is a large plum type with none of the empty spaces found in many other varieties. There are few seeds, and the ripe flesh is perfect for thick paste. Used fresh, 'Viva Italia' makes a luscious Greek salad with olives and goat cheese.

The succulent, summery flavor of the old varieties is hard to find in newer hybrids so I always plant some heirloom tomatoes in the garden for slicing. These often thin-skinned fruits make the best tomato sandwiches, their sweet-tart flavor is the quintessential taste of summer. 'Belgian Giant' is an old favorite. One thick slice of a huge, pink fruit will send BLT lovers into paroxysms of pleasure. These tomatoes are slow to mature, requiring nearly three months from transplanting to fruiting. This leaves plenty of time to enjoy earlier ripening varieties and to anticipate the day when the first 'Belgian Giant' will be ready to fall, warm and flavorful, into the gardener's outstretched hand.

I have been searching for the perfect yellow or gold tomato for several years. Last year I grew 'Persimmon' for the first time. It does, as its name suggests, resemble that fruit in shape and color and the flavor is excellent. It has just a bit of tomato tang together with a sweetness that makes it a great ingredient in fresh or cooked dishes. I use 'Persimmon' to make a beautiful golden tomato sauce to spoon over grilled eggplant, red peppers, and spinach fettuccine — a feast for the eye as well as the palate.

Now the reviewing of past efforts and results is over, the delicious memories set aside. It's time to select a few tomato varieties that will be new to my garden. I am drawn to one called

'Bush Early Girl'. It's small enough to grow in a container, and has large, bright red fruits and a maturity date earlier than most other tomatoes...I wouldn't have to wait quite so long for my first wonderful treat! I am always interested in tomatoes that can be grown in large pots or tucked in among the annuals in my flowerbed. 'Container Choice' may be a good one to try. The description promises compact plants and plenty of fruit. A couple of these in pots on the patio would be tasty and convenient.

These are only a few of the hundreds of varieties from which I'll make my final choices, difficult as that will be. However, I must be realistic, I can't get many more than eighty tomato plants into the garden...I'll move the herbs to the bed by the garage and the peppers can be planted in the flower garden and....

*All of Melodie's selections, and many more, will be available as starter plants at Behnke's this spring season.*

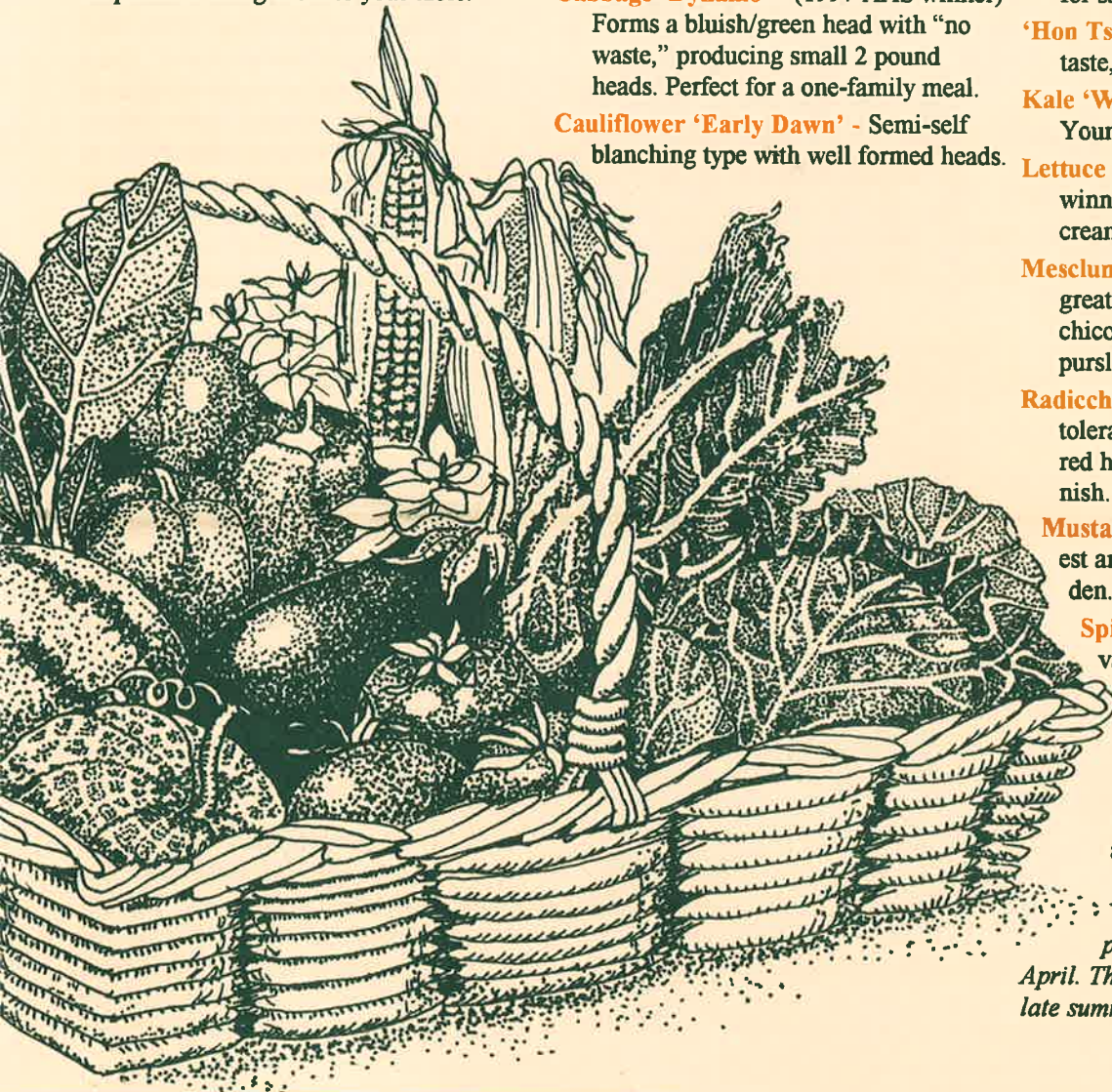




# Meet Your Vegetables

Throughout most of human history toiling in a vegetable patch was more accurately described as work, not pleasure. Surely our ancestors would be surprised to learn that vegetable gardening had become one of the most popular pastimes in the world. Somehow this return to nature soothes the places where modern humans are ruffled, and puts us in touch with principles that have remained unchanged through the ages.

And luckily for us, the choices are more abundant than ever before. Here are some newer, improved varieties that we especially like. Many of them have won the prestigious "All America Selection" award (AAS). We know they'll perform well in your vegetable garden, and you'll be proud to bring them to your table.



**Broccoflower 'Green Goddess'** - A cross between cauliflower and broccoli — best of both worlds!

**Broccoli 'Green Comet'** - the most popular broccoli variety. High yielding and easy to grow.

**Broccoli 'Spring Raab'** - Extremely popular in Italy. Expensive in gourmet restaurants and markets. Must be cooked before eating. Yields many informal heads.

**Brussels Sprouts 'Bubbles'** - One of the best varieties available. Larger (2½ inch) sprouts with a good flavor.

**Chinese Cabbage 'Blues'** - A Napa type with tight, upright heads that are pleasingly sweet.

**Cabbage 'Dynamo'** - (1997 AAS winner) Forms a bluish/green head with "no waste," producing small 2 pound heads. Perfect for a one-family meal.

**Cauliflower 'Early Dawn'** - Semi-self blanching type with well formed heads.

—by Eric Morisson, Beltsville Annual Specialist

**Celery 'Golden Yellow'** - The best self-blanching variety for the home garden.

**Collards 'Vates'** - Adds spicy flavor and vitamins when cooked like spinach or used in soups.

**Snap Pea 'Sugar Snap'** - (AAS winner) Voted the #1 vegetable by home gardeners. Sweet and crisp. Resistant to pea wilt.

**Arugula 'Rouquette'** - Use raw in salads or cooked as you would spinach.

**Chinese Pak Choi 'Mei Qing Choi'** - Very popular cooked in stir-fry recipes. Also good raw in salads.

**Escarole 'Gross Bouclee'** - Closely related to chicory and radicchio. Blanch the bunches and use the inner leaves for salads.

**'Hon Tsai Tai'** - Pleasing mild mustard taste, ideal for stir-fry and salads.

**Kale 'Winterbor'** - Popular cooked. Young leaves may be used in salads.

**Lettuce 'Buttercrunch Bibb'** - (AAS winner) Very crunchy with a heart of creamy-white leaves.

**Mesclun Mix 'Mesclun Mild Mix'** - A great mix of greens including chervil, chicory, chicory, lettuces, scallions, purslane and arugula.

**Radicchio 'Augusto'** - The most frost-tolerant variety with deep burgundy-red heads. Use in salads or as a garnish.

**Mustard 'Southern Giant'** - The sweetest and most peppery greens in the garden. Adds a kick of spice to salads.

**Spinach 'Melody'** - One of the best varieties of spinach.

**Swiss Chard 'Bright Lights'** - (1998 AAS winner) Extremely colorful and ornamental, this chard can be used in salads or the stems can be cooked like celery and the leaves like spinach. ❧

Cool season vegetables can be planted now through the end of April. These crops may also be planted in late summer for a fall crop.



## A Touch of the Tropics

— by Mike Bader, Beltsville Houseplant Department Manager

**A**s I write these lines in early March, the forsythia is blooming, the birds are singing and children are running around outside in shirtsleeves. But March is anything but predictable, especially this year when the weather ranges anywhere from wacky to catastrophic.

Regardless of the conditions outdoors, an exotic world awaits you anytime in the Behnke Houseplant Department. Our tropical greenhouses are filled year round with rich foliage, brilliant blooms and tempting fragrance — so you can enjoy that special interaction with nature, even during the colder seasons. Let me tell you about some of my favorite plants.

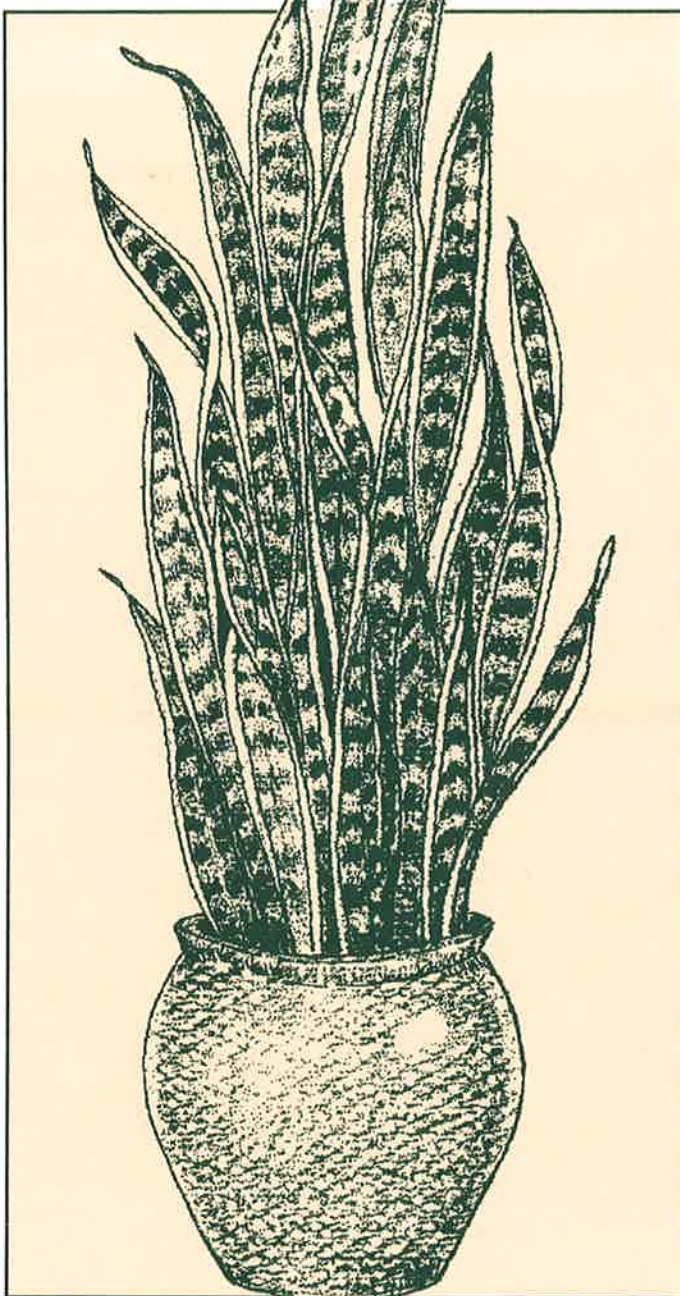
Eight new tropical hibiscus varieties will be available

this year. They are the new Trade Winds varieties, and they are bred for and distinguished by their abundant flowers and better bud drop resistance than earlier hibiscus varieties. Varieties such as 'Calypso Wind' and 'Sahara Wind' tend to be larger and more robust than the more compact varieties with 'Breeze' in their name. Four of the varieties, 'Paradise Breeze', 'Velvet Wind', 'Mango Breeze', and 'Raspberry Breeze', are novelties because of their unique flower color. I have seen these new varieties and the colors are intense. In addition to our popular hot pink and glowing red varieties, you should look for light orange, raspberry-red, golden-yellow, orange with a mauve throat, and mango-peach flowers. 'Mango Breeze' is one of the few hibiscus varieties of any kind that will hold its flowers fully open for at least two days.

Want a plant that is easy to grow, requires little water, shows resistance to disease and common pest problems, and takes very little light? Try a Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema*). You are probably familiar with the common variety 'Silver Queen' found just about everywhere. But you must check out the eight new varieties we are offering this year. 'Amelia', 'Mary Ann', and 'Royal Ripple' have thick, glossy, medium-sized leaves with a compact growth

habit. You must see the fullness of 'Amelia' in the 10 inch pot size when they arrive. I especially like 'Royal Ripple' because the leaf margin forms little waves, just like water stirred by a gentle breeze. 'Rhapsody in Green' offers a more vigorous growth habit, thinner and longer leaves with a taller and wider foliage spread. This variety looks spectacular in our new assortment of Chinese porcelain fishbowls and rosewood stands.

'Green Lady', 'Black Lance', and 'Queen of Siam', have either silvery green leaves, dark green margins and highlights, chartreuse variegation, or near white midveins. When you find 'Painted Princess', take a closer look. Each leaf appears to have been carefully stroked by an artist's brush.



Looking for a plant to place in a room without any windows? Try a sansevieria — better known as snake plant. 'Black Gold' is my favorite with very dark green, almost black, upright leaves. The thick and leathery leaves have deep golden-yellow bands along their margin. 'Coral', and 'Moon Glow' have also been added to our selection of these low-light, low-maintenance plants.

On your next visit to our tropical greenhouse, let your sense of smell lead you to our 'Miami Supreme' gardenia trees. This year we will have more than ever with blossoms twice the size of our popular 'Veitchi' gardenia bushes. Many times I enjoy the perfume of a single blossom clear across the greenhouse.

The sight of greenery and flower color in your home can provide you with pleasure year round. At the same time, indoor plants will enhance any interior by adding natural forms, color, and fragrances.

Pay us a visit and discover the many fascinating residents of the Behnke Houseplant Department greenhouses. Regardless of the weather outside you can always escape to our tropical oasis of color and fragrance. We look forward to seeing you. ☺



## Epimedium — by Larry Hurley, Perennial Specialist

Here's a quick quiz — what's the most undervalued, nicest blooming, most well-behaved ground cover for shade? I know you all said "epimedium." Sometimes known as bishop's hat, epimedium is the reigning "Queen of the Shade Ground Covers." It's perfect for the shade gardener who wants a perennial that is effective before the hostas unfurl in spring.

Epimedium is native to Europe and Asia. There are currently about ten species and cultivars that are found at your more discriminating garden centers. Recent plant collecting expeditions to China, however, promise to yield many more choices in the future.

Typically, epimedium is somewhat slow growing, especially in the first few years, so it is a plant for people that plan to maintain the same garden for awhile. Also, because it is slow, it tends to look scrawny in the pot and be a bit more expensive than other perennials. Epimedium grows faster in an area with a few hours of morning sun, but it will tolerate shade all day long. Good garden soil, with summer irrigation and occasional feeding results in faster growth also, but it will survive dry soil and low fertility. The varieties currently available range in height from 6 to 12 inches. They have evergreen leaves, but if exposed to winter winds,

often windburn. The appearance of the clump will be better if the old foliage is cut to the ground early in the spring before blooms appear, some time before March 1. Depending on the species, the flowers may be yellow, white, pink, red or lilac. Blooms appear in late April and are effective for two to four weeks. They look like dainty miniature columbine

**"...perfect for the shade gardener who wants a perennial that is effective before the hostas unfurl in spring."**

flowers, and, depending on the species, the flowers may precede, be held above, or mix with the new foliage as it appears.

I grow epimedium at the base of oak trees, mixed with ferns and hostas. I also use them in beds where they weave among stands of variegated Solomon's seal, hosta and tricyrtis. Mixing them with other species adds a broader seasonal interest, as epimedium plants tend to be rather unspectacular after they finish blooming.

Propagate by division in late summer or fall. With a trowel, cut 4" to 6" sections out of the main clump and replant.

After ten years of experience with epimedium in my garden, I can say that for a low maintenance, attractive, blooming ground cover you could not find a better plant. Here are the descriptions of a few of my favorites.

***Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Lilic Fairy'** ('Lilifee'): My personal favorite, the large lilac-pink flowers are held above chocolate-brown foliage for a stunning display. As the foliage ages it turns to green.

***Epimedium x rubrum***: Bright red star-shaped flowers with an ivory white cross superimposed appear mixed with the new foliage. This is one of the faster spreading cultivars.

***Epimedium x versicolor* 'Sulphureum'**: Delicate light yellow blooms appear with the newly emerging foliage, which has a red cast. Also has nice reddish fall and winter character. One of the faster spreading types.

***Epimedium x youngianum* 'Niveum'**: Another personal favorite. Small white flowers are more cup-shaped than other types, and held daintily above the foliage.

***Epimedium x youngianum* 'Roseum'**: Similar to 'Niveum', but with a very pale lavender bloom. ☺

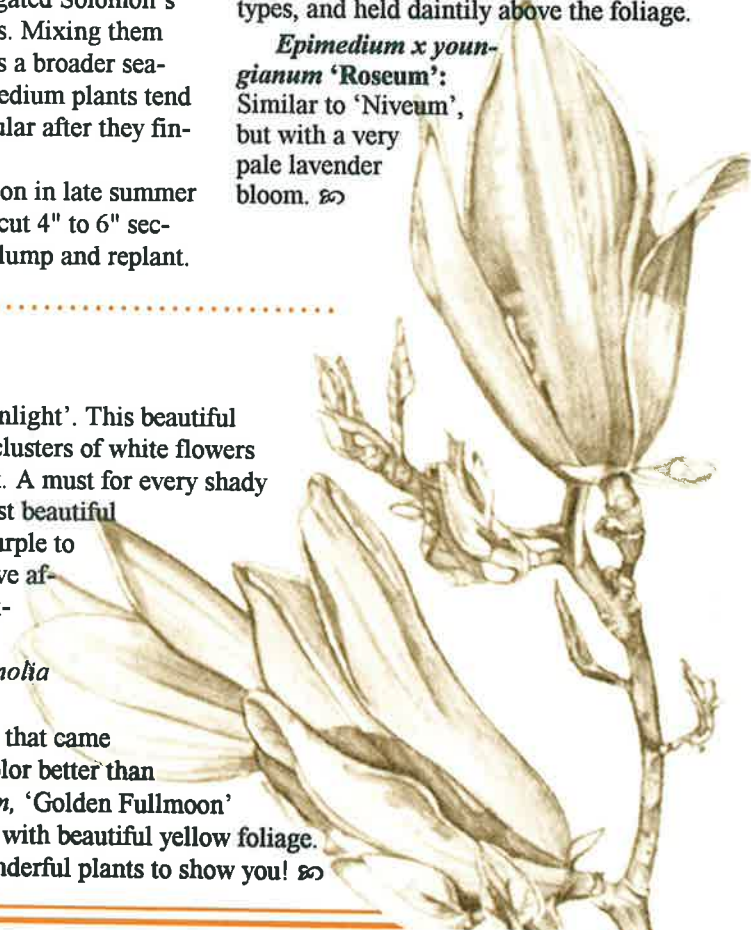
*(An Exceptional Spring, continued from page 1)*

Last year we introduced the *Schizophragma hydrangoides* 'Moonlight'. This beautiful climbing hydrangea will lighten up your shady garden with showy clusters of white flowers and silvery patterned foliage that shimmers like reflected moonlight. A must for every shady garden. This year we'll have plenty of *Hydrangea sargentii*, the most beautiful of all lacecap hydrangeas with velvety blue-green leaves and pale purple to white flowers that are 5 to 8 inches across. This hydrangea must have afternoon shade and grows to 6 or 7 feet — nice for an attractive background or specimen plant.

You'll fall in love with the pale yellow, fragrant flowers of *Magnolia* 'Elizabeth'. The elegantly tapered buds open in late April.

'Red Dragon' is the name for a new red laceleaf Japanese maple that came to us from New Zealand. It branches lower and holds its deep red color better than any other maple. A real gem! And finally, *Acer shirasawana aureum*, 'Golden Fullmoon' Maple! This dwarf tree will surely brighten up a semi-shady garden with beautiful yellow foliage.

I hope to see you this spring. I have these and so many other wonderful plants to show you! ☺



## Blue Ribbon Perennials

— by Martha Pindale of Bluemount Nurseries

Some exciting new perennials will be coming your way this spring at Behnke's. They are the unusual and very hard to find plants in the Blue Ribbon Line of perennials introduced by Bluemount Nurseries, a wholesale grower since 1926.

One of the brightest stars in the Blue Ribbon Line is *Aquilegia* 'Leprechaun Gold'. The electric yellow leaflets of this columbine will stand out in the darkest corner of the shade garden. With its stunning foliage this plant doesn't even need flowers to make a splash! However, it does sport magnificently tall spikes of dark purple blooms in May and June. The seed pods are quite ornamental and if allowed to remain standing will eventually spring open. The seeds will fall to the ground and many bright yellow seedlings are the result! *Aquilegia* 'Leprechaun Gold' combines well with hosta and ferns. For a really heart stopping combination, team it up with any of the purple flowering heucheras, such as 'Palace Purple', 'Plum Puddin'', or 'Amethyst Mist'.

Another spring bloomer that will stand out above the rest is *Dicentra formosa* 'Aurora'. This fringed bleeding heart is much more vigorous and long blooming than the straight species. The finely cut leaves are somewhat gray in color, the white flowers are large and the bloom time is long. With credentials like that, what's

not to like? Grow this pretty new dicentra in rich soil and you will be rewarded with beautiful flowers June through August. It grows 12 to 18 inches tall and thrives in shady gardens, although it will tolerate morning sun.

Perhaps you have heard of, or even have, *Lamium* 'White Nancy'. Now her sister, 'Red Nancy', is available at Behnke's. Beautiful silvery-white foliage makes this a good choice for a partly shaded spot in your garden. *Lamiums* bloom in May and June and reach a height of only 6 to 8 inches, making them perfect for edging or as a groundcover.

Not all the Blue Ribbon plants are spring bloomers. There are plenty of plants to perk up the midsummer garden as well. If you love the color purple the richly hued flowers of *Phlox paniculata* 'Nicky' are for you. This compact phlox has dark green leaves, and the large flower trusses are a vibrant purple. They start to bloom in July and don't quit until the first frost. 'Nicky' is mildew resistant and its flowers are a butterfly magnet! Growing to a height of only 24 to 30 inches, this stunning plant is perfect for the sunny garden.

Yet another plant for those who are passionate about purple is *Penstemon* 'Russian River'. With its deep purple, tubular flowers, this penstemon stands out from the literally hundreds of cultivars

available. It blooms all summer long, right up until the first frost. Good drainage and lots of sun are essential for this plant to thrive. All penstemons have an aversion to wet feet, especially in winter, and are therefore not always reliably hardy in this area. Taking a few cuttings in the fall will ensure that you will have this beauty next year. A light shearing in June will help keep *Penstemon* 'Russian River' more compact and will encourage side branching.

Visit Behnke's impressive Perennial Department this spring and look for the plants in the Blue Ribbon Line — they're easy to find — each plant is potted in an electric blue pot! These perennial plants are not only outstanding, they stand out!



New Limited Edition Behnke T-Shirts! See page 3

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