



Inside

2

Behnke's Basic Perennials

The backbone of the perennial garden

Meet: Orion Taylor

3

Perennials for Everyman

A recipe for success

4,5

Container Gardening

New places, new spaces

6

Garden Tools

Quality tools to last a lifetime

Gardening Activities

7

Tropical Romance in Your Backyard

New ideas for bold color

8

Kids: Cultivating a Budding Gardener

Purple Coneflower — An American Beauty

— by Larry Hurley, Perennial Specialist

Albert and Rose Behnke opened Behnke Nurseries here in Beltsville, Maryland in 1930. Originally from Germany, they brought knowledge of plants and gardening from Europe. As a result, Behnke Nurseries has offered a wide selection of perennials for many years, long before the current wave of popularity began in the 1980's. When the Perennial Plant Association (PPA) was formed in the early 1980's, Behnke's was one of the first retail members. Each year since 1990, the PPA has named a perennial as the *Perennial Plant of the Year*. The winner must be an outstanding ornamental plant that is hardy over a wide range of weather conditions.

This year's winner is *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus', a selected variety of the native American prairie plant, the purple coneflower. The Europeans appreciated many of our American plants before we did. 'Magnus' was developed at the nursery of Magnus Nilsson in Sweden. The perennialistas at Behnke's began growing 'Magnus' from seeds imported from Germany years before it was "re-discovered" by American gardeners.

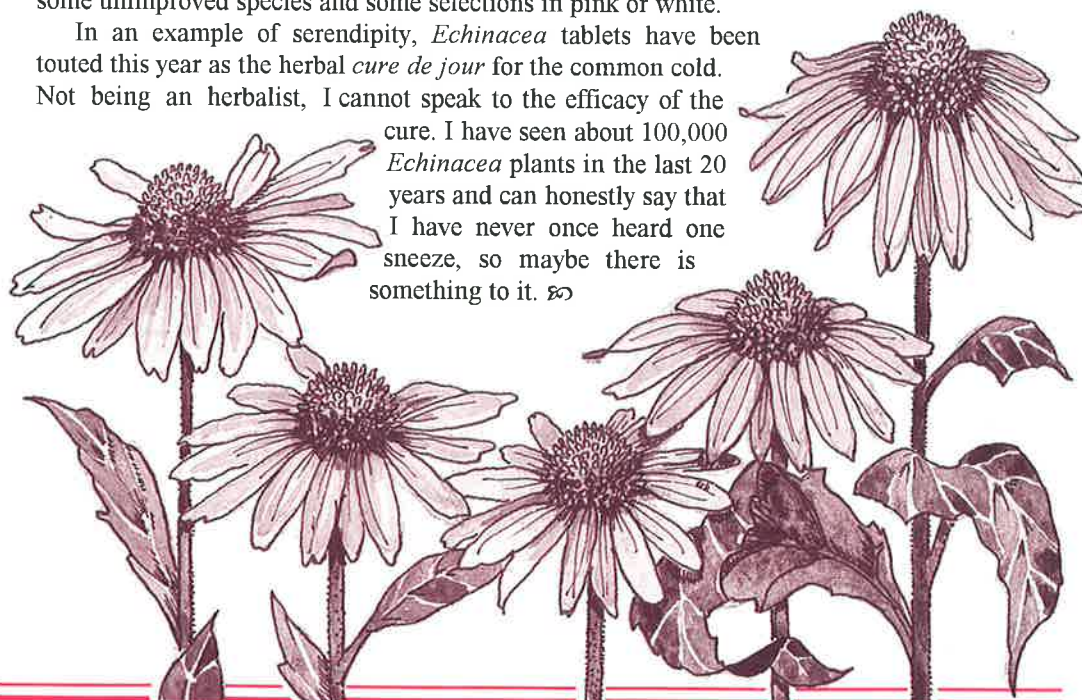
'Magnus' will reach a height of 2 to 4 feet, depending on the quality of the soil. The foliage is a basal clump, with long flower stems bearing 4 inch daisies of a deep carmine color and broad, flat petals (think "rum-drink paper parasol"). The plant naturally flowers in July and August (in pots they may bloom earlier or later). It forms a tight, non-invasive crown and will stay where you plant it. As with any seed-propagated plant, it may spread through self-seeding. Finches like to feed on the seed in late summer; butterflies are fond of the blooms. It makes a terrific cut flower.

Culture is easy. It prefers at least 6 hours of sun, decent soil that drains well, and a little fertilizer in the late fall or early spring. It has no serious insect pests.

Plant three to five plants to get a dramatic effect, and for a really great display, plant with a PPA choice of yesteryear, Russian sage (*Perovskia*), a plant with powder-blue flowers. In addition to 'Magnus', Behnke Nurseries carries another half dozen or so other *Echinacea* — some unimproved species and some selections in pink or white.

In an example of serendipity, *Echinacea* tablets have been touted this year as the herbal *cure de jour* for the common cold.

Not being an herbalist, I cannot speak to the efficacy of the cure. I have seen about 100,000 *Echinacea* plants in the last 20 years and can honestly say that I have never once heard one sneeze, so maybe there is something to it. ☺



Behnke's Basic Perennials

— by Randy Best, Perennial Specialist

Behnke's Perennial Department has always been known as the place to discover something new and unique. We have always offered the finest selection of quality perennials to be found anywhere. Too often, though, the tried and true workhorses of the perennial garden are passed over in the mad rush to acquire the hottest and newest perennial varieties. These true gardening classics are the solid foundation upon which a spectacular collection of the "one-of-a-kinds" is built. Without them, there is no continuity in the repetition of color, form, and texture necessary to achieve good garden design. Many of our "Behnke Basics" are past Perennial Plant Association (PPA) award winners (see page 1), and all are an exceptional value.

Here are just a few of my choices from the "Behnke Basics" collection.

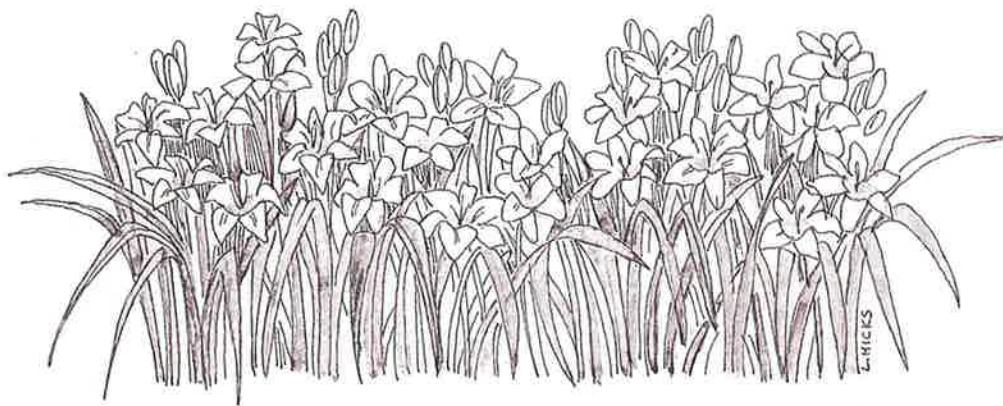
Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus' - This is the 1998 PPA Plant of the Year (see page 1).

Cerastigma plumbaginoides - a tough and long-lived groundcover which breaks dormancy late in spring. The dark blue flowers, which are attractive to butterflies, bloom from late spring to fall. Green foliage takes on burgundy red tones in fall.

Rudbeckia fulgida 'Goldsturm' (Black-eyed Susan, Maryland State Flower) - These native plants are truly perennial, heat tolerant, and free-flowering. The single golden daisies bloom most of the summer — always looking fresh despite the heat.

Sedum spectabile 'Autumn Joy' - Bold, broad gray-green foliage in a tight, fast growing, rounded mound form. Adds fantastic texture to the sunny border. The attraction of the plant is further enhanced by spectacular clusters of pink flowers in late summer which transform through the season to shades of coppery-red and mahogany.

Hemerocallis 'Happy Returns' - Cheery, lemon-yellow, ruffled flowers continue almost nonstop, in a softer shade than 'Stella D'oro'. Fantastic in combination with bluish ornamental grasses and other yellow and blue perennial flowers.

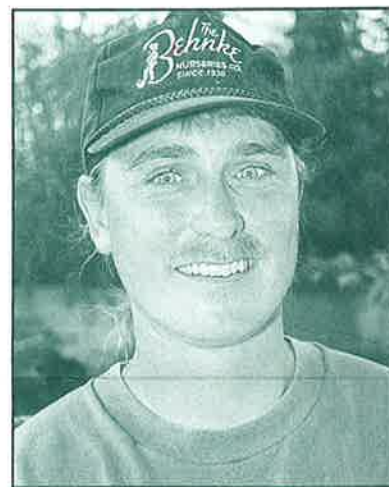


Salvia nemorosa 'Mainacht' ('May Night') - 1997 PPA Plant of the Year. Low growing salvia that comes into bloom in early summer and bears a multitude of deep violet-blue flower spikes. If kept deadheaded, it will bloom throughout the summer.

Coreopsis verticillata 'Moonbeam' - Pale, butter-yellow flowers seem to float on the billowy, fine-textured foliage of this nonstop bloomer. A must for every sunny perennial border — it looks super with blue or lavender flowers. Past PPA winner.

Come and visit Behnke Nurseries' tremendous Perennial Department this season. I know you'll be captivated by my choices here as well as our new selections for 1998. You'll soon discover why we say "When you know plants, you know Behnke's." ☺

Meet: Orion Taylor



His namesake is the constellation Orion, which acted as a beacon when his parents were driving to Anchorage, Alaska, where he was born.

Orion's love of the outdoors led him to apply to Behnke's in April, 1987. "That was one busy year! I had to learn so much that spring... and I've been learning ever since." Orion earned his Certified Professional Horticulturist license three years later in 1990, and today he is one of the most knowledgeable nurserymen in our Beltsville Woody Plants Department. His helpfulness and cheerful demeanor make him one of the most popular, too!

Orion and his wife, Stephanie, met at Behnke's when she was working as a cashier. "It was almost like love at first sight," says Orion. They share a love of gardening, and believe in the importance of encouraging environmental awareness. Their backyard is recognized as a wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

Orion is very artistic and creative. He's recently become an amateur video animator. He has a good eye for design and derives great satisfaction from being able to suggest a plant or landscape scheme that is pleasing to his customers. Come and see Orion anytime, he's always happy to help you! ☺



A Perennial Garden for Everyone

—by Randy Best, Perennial Specialist

A You don't have to be a master gardener to plant a lovely perennial garden any more than you have to be a master chef to prepare a gourmet meal. But it does help to follow a recipe!

I suggest that you approach the making of a perennial garden the same way you would the preparation of a good meal. Assemble all the ingredients, choose the implements needed to prepare and combine these ingredients, then go to work in a logical sequence. The recipe you follow may be your own or an interpretation of a planting you admire. For those who are uncertain about which perennials go well together, look at the display gardens at Brookside Gardens or other nature centers, or study pleasing garden combinations shown in the gardening books and magazines available in Behnke's Garden Shop.

One big advantage that most perennials have over shrubs, conifers, or trees is that they are much quicker to get established. Some will make an impact the first year. By the second year you can expect the rest to reach their full maturity. Perennials are also easier to relocate as the garden fills in and you wish to make changes.

Being able to picture in your mind how the finished garden will look is essential to selecting the plants and other materials that will give you the look you are seeking. The size of your lot will determine the number of plants you need.

Mark out beds using string, a garden hose or stakes. This will allow you to visualize how the finished bed will look from all angles. You can rearrange your design until you arrive at a pleasing perspective. Then when ready you can dig the edge to define the space.

When calculating how many plants to purchase, think of them in groups rather than individually. You will probably want to plant in threes or fives of each type, although if your garden is large, groups of seven or nine would be better.

Plant size is another factor to keep in mind. If a plant is large-leaved like *Ligularia* 'Desdemona' or some of the large varieties of *Hosta*, you may want to plant in groups of one to

three since the leaves will cover a wider area. Plants of smaller stature or with smaller leaves, such as *Hakonechloa macra aureola*, Blooms of Bressingham's *Polemonium* 'Brise d'Anjou' or many varieties of *Astilbe* will need closer spacing.

Color and flowering times are by no means the only considerations when deciding which plants go where. Shape, size and habit are equally important when you want a good combination of form as well as color.

If some of your favorites are small daisies, such as *Rudbeckia* 'Viette's Little Suzy' or silvery foliage plants such as *Lavandula* 'Blue Cushion', consider alternating them with something more upright, such as *Liatris* 'Kobold' or *Penstemon* 'Sour Grapes'. By planting rounded or shrubby plants against others with a lateral spreading habit, you give the eye a pleasingly diverse effect that is never boring. In a sunny location you can use taller varieties to create shade for plants that need some relief from the hot afternoon sun.

If some of your choices flower in colors that clash, or that are vibrant to the point of being overpowering, you can still use them to good effect in the same border by interposing a neutral tone to buffer the colors. *Achillea* 'Anthea' and other silvery foliaged plants such as *Artemisia* and *Stachys* are ideal for this purpose, as are ornamental grasses. A bolder accent such as the bronze to purple foliage of *Heuchera* will help subtler colors show to their best advantage.

The number of plants you purchase will depend upon your budget. Never be discouraged if you can't afford to make your garden look the way you want immediately. It may seem a bit bare at first, but you will have the pleasure of watching it fill out over the ensuing seasons.

Finally, don't expect the first effort to be perfect. It takes a certain amount of knowledge and an investment of time. Even the experts often get it wrong, just as master chefs do, and they both have to rethink their 'recipes' many times. ☺



Containing Your Love of a Garden

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Department



An outdoor potted garden can solve many problems facing gardeners today. Small and contained, they require little space and demand less of your time, but are still extremely rewarding. It's a matter of proximity. While a distant border of scarlet sage requires quantity to achieve its impact, what could be more effective than a single rosebud unfurling just beside you on your garden patio?

Potted gardens bring the beauty, the fragrance, and the action right up to you. You have control over the level of involvement. Your garden can be as simple or as sophisticated as you choose. Even a relatively challenging potted garden, such as a standard (miniature tree), an espalier, or a topiary is easy compared to an entire full-sized garden. The labor may be intensive, but it's on a scale so small that only minutes a week are required to maintain it in pristine condition.

Choosing a Container

Whether you prefer an exquisite china demitasse or an old boot, anything goes. Other than the ability to "contain," there is only one requirement that is necessary for success — drainage. Don't try to grow plants without it unless you are willing to take a big risk. If you're reluctant to drill holes in a priceless possession you can plant into a plastic pot or liner that fits within the larger vessel and which can be removed for watering and drainage.

Soil

We recommend a light potting soil, such as Baccto Lite®, or the slightly heavier, excellent quality Fafard Complete Mix®, or a soilless mix, such as Pro Mix BX®. The latter does not retain as much moisture, so you need to decide which is best for you and your gardening habits. If you prefer to mix your own soil, start with our quality topsoil which already contains the necessary peat moss and sand. You add either perlite for better drainage, or vermiculite for increased moisture retention.

Plant Selection

If you're a beginner, you should probably avoid more challenging plants or plant combinations, and stick to houseplants, annuals, many perennials, and most summer flowering bulbs. Just make sure that all the plants you combine are happy in the same general environment; i.e., a dry sunny location, or a moist, shady spot. It's easy to accomplish this when you select your plants from Behnke's, because you'll find plants grouped together according to their sun exposure requirement, and often, according to their heights as well. Combine different plants to achieve a look that pleases you, taking into account the eventual size and height of your selections. (When planting a container garden, you can space plants closer together than recommended on the culture information signs accompanying the plants in our greenhouses.)

Once you've made your selections and planted your containers, take a few minutes to make a record for future reference. Occasionally assess the planting and decide what changes you might make to improve it. In two or three years, you could be approaching total perfection!

Color

There are really no wrong choices, only more or less effective ones. When you're standing in a greenhouse brimming with blooms of every description, it's tempting to start grabbing with reckless abandon. But, especially when dealing with small spaces, a little restraint goes a long way — too much color can be disappointing. (Remember what happened when, as a kid, you wanted to dip your paintbrush into all the colors...) Apply a little know-how to your selection. Here are a few traditional color schemes.

Monochromatic — one color (plus foliage). Although this may sound boring it can be captivating — think of an all-white garden in the moonlight or an expansive field of red tulips.

Analogous — related colors. Achieve warmth (red, orange, yellow) or a cool

look (blues, violet) by combining neighbors on the color wheel. White or silver can be added for interest.

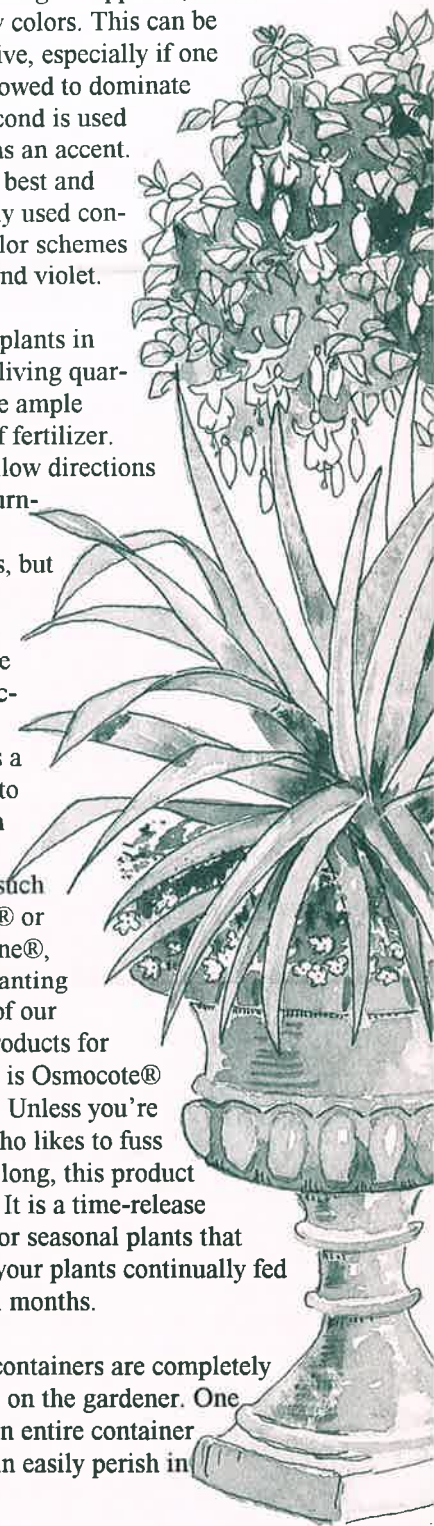
Contrasting — opposite, or complementary colors. This can be very effective, especially if one color is allowed to dominate and the second is used sparingly as an accent. One of the best and most widely used contrasting color schemes is yellow and violet.

Fertilizer

Blooming plants in contained living quarters require ample amounts of fertilizer. Always follow directions to avoid burning tender transplants, but be sure to fertilize as often as the product recommends. It's always a good idea to mix a high quality fertilizer, such as Electra® or GardenTone®, into the planting soil. One of our favorite products for containers is Osmocote® 14-14-14. Unless you're the type who likes to fuss all season long, this product is for you. It is a time-release fertilizer for seasonal plants that will keep your plants continually fed for several months.

Watering

Plants in containers are completely dependant on the gardener. One plant, or an entire container garden, can easily perish in



one day if the roots are allowed to dry past the point of no return. Most inexperienced gardeners want to be told specifically how often to water, yet most professional horticulturists shy away from specifics. There are simply too many variables. For

example, a newly planted container may only need water twice a week in mid-April, but in late August, the same container may require two waterings a day. Early in the season the days are cooler, the sun is lower in the sky, and the roots-to-soil ratio is relatively low. After several months of active growth, the roots have completely filled the container in order to support larger amount of flowers and foliage. In addition the days are hot and much water is lost to evaporation and through the transpiration process of the plants. It may help to remember: more roots, more foliage, more water.

Never water because you think the plant is dry. Always *know* that it is time to water. Admittedly, during summers here in the Washington area, it seems it's *always* time to water — but you need to have a feel for each container to be able to judge accurately. If you can easily lift it, compare the weight of the pot when it is dry to its just-watered weight. We often use this simple method here at the nursery. You do need to remember to adjust your estimates as the plants grow and become heavier. Check them often.

Another method is to watch for signs of early wilt — a dulling of the foliage followed by the first stages of leaf wilt. It is not advisable to use this method regularly, but used occasionally, this method can help you determine if you are perhaps watering too often. If it takes three days for the plants to exhibit signs of early wilt, then your daily waterings were probably too frequent.

And then of course there's the finger method. Poke your finger deep into the soil to feel for signs of dampness. Keep in mind that the most moisture is usually concentrated near the bottom of the container, so a slightly drying surface could be deceiving.

When you do water, it is critical to thoroughly saturate the soil. You will know you have achieved this when excess water runs out of the

drainage holes. Saturating the soil ensures that the entire root system has access to water and helps to flush fertilizer residues from the soil. Allowing all the excess water to escape prevents the root system from becoming waterlogged, which can lead to rot and other problems. Never allow a potted plant to stand in a saucer of water which has just drained from the pot. Empty the saucer promptly.

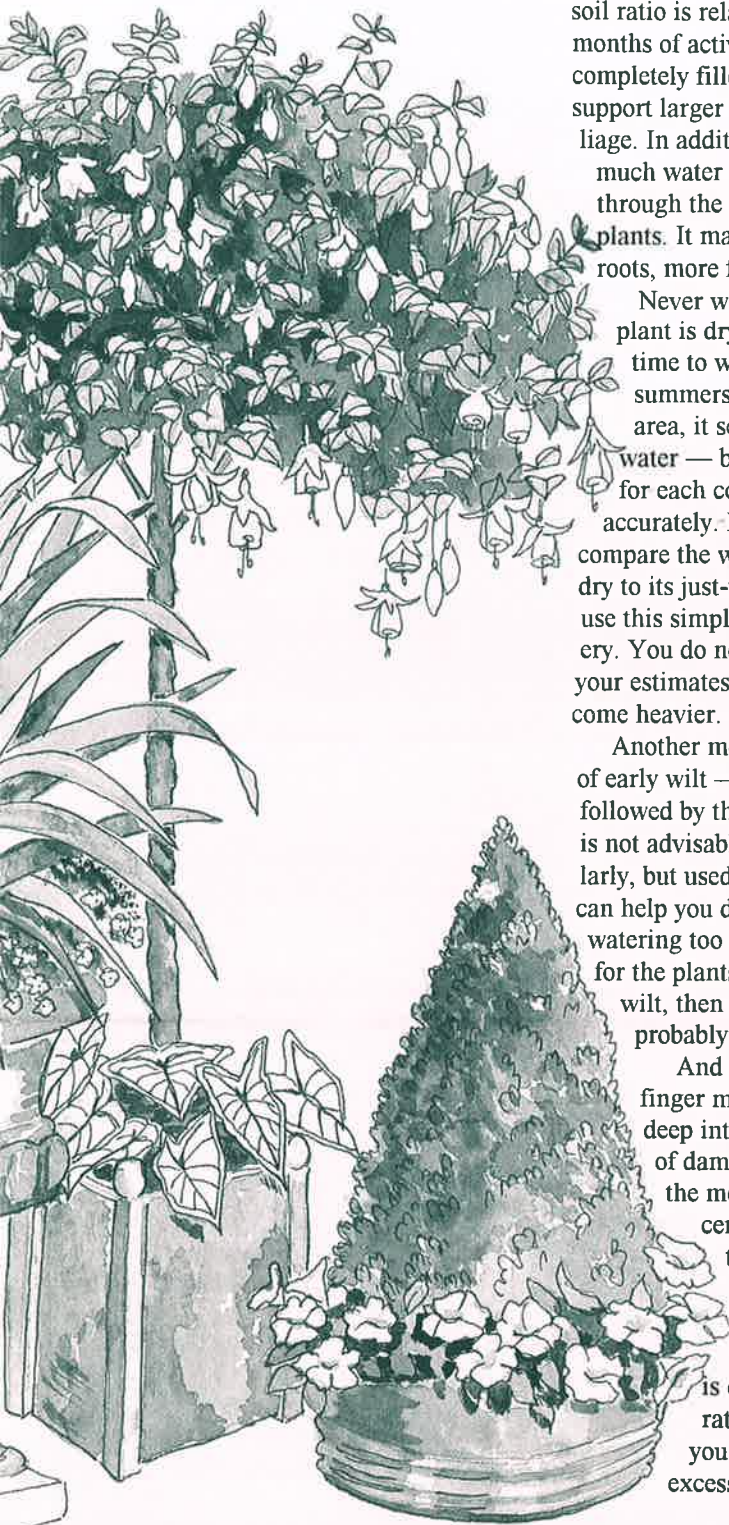
A word of caution. Occasionally a totally bewildered customer will bring us a severely distressed or deceased potted plant claiming to have watered it thoroughly and often. But in fact, the rootball can become so dry during a brief period of underwatering that it contracts and shrinks away from the sides of the container. When water is applied, it simply runs down the inside of the pot and out the drainage holes, never penetrating the rootball. The gardener thinks a thorough watering has been sustained and may withhold subsequent waterings, thinking the plant to be over watered!

Therefore, pay attention to the interval of time between watering and drainage. If the water drains too quickly take care to thoroughly soak the roots with a slow trickle of water until the rootball swells and recovers.

Finishing Touches

Transform a plain potted plant into a charming miniature garden. To achieve instant antiquity, cover the surface of the soil with moss, or a low-growing spreading plant. The perennial herb creeping thyme works well, as do the houseplants baby's tears and string of pearls. These plants will neatly spread across the soil and gracefully spill over the edges to cascade down the sides of the container. This is especially effective with topiaries. It completes the look beautifully.

Perhaps Providence will bless you with longevity so you can be mistress or master of an expansive old-fashioned garden. Then you'll have time for some really high-quality puttering. Until then, potted gardens are more than ample compensation. They are just perfect for your hectic lifestyle yet they will keep your thumb a most pleasing shade of green. ☺



Garden Tools — The Best Picks

—by Helen Gardiner, Garden Shop Buyer

Gardening Activities

At Behnke's Garden Shop, we always try to carry tools that will outperform others on the market. We are serious gardeners and respect our customers' right to inspect and handle their tools before they purchase them. We also do extensive testings on the many of the tools — either in our home gardens or at our Largo production gardens.

We are delighted to introduce you to some of the most well-designed and beautifully made tools by the English firm of **Spear and Jackson**. The Spear and Jackson name is synonymous with quality. The 200-year-old firm combines generations of gardening experience with commitment to state of the art tool design. Our own perennial department uses their Spear and Jackson digging forks to dig and lift the many thousands of perennials that they grow every year. In past trials of tools, the digging forks used for the heavy work done by the perennial department would last one season at best. But the last three years they have tested and fallen in love with the Spear and Jackson digging forks. Three years of digging duty and still going strong! This tool is an investment in future gardening!

The Spear and Jackson digging spade is another beautifully designed tool. It is a heavy duty spade that does a great job of transplanting trees and shrubs, and does a fantastic job of edging the garden beds. It is also excellent for working in a raised bed without destroying other plants because you can easily maneuver it around established roots. It is a heavy duty tool but lightweight enough that a smaller person will not tire when working with it.

Another great manufacturer that we highly recommend is the Swiss firm of **Felco**. Their pruning shears are the highest quality tools and are made to last for generations. They are made with solidly forged metal alloy handles, and hollow ground, Swiss precision hardened blades. One of the nicest aspects of Felco pruners for many gardeners is the fact that we can help you replace any part of the shears that you might lose or break. We can order blades, replacement springs, and replacement lock latches. All we need is the model number of the pruner. Maintenance of Felco pruning shears is easy — just keep the sap cleaned off with WD-40 or any other water-displacing oil. This simple step will keep rust from accumulating on the metal.

Some of the most popular models are:

Felco Number 2 is the original pruner designed for the nurseryman who is constantly trimming plants and roots prior to potting the plants. Our own Helmut has used his for the nearly 30 years he has directed the potting of our roses. He replaces the blade on his shears every year and reports, "Felco Number 2 is the best and only pruning shears I will use. My Felco will outlast me."

Felco Number 5 is a larger pruner with a longer blade that you can use for cutting stems up to 1 inch in diameter. These shears are designed for the larger hand and stronger grip.

Felco Number 6 is a wonderful pruner with a narrow, short blade that is designed for cutting close to the stem, and is perfect for the small to medium size hand. Many gardeners use it daily for cutting flowers and herbs from the garden, and also for cutting the stems of fresh and dried flowers as they create floral arrangements.

We also carry three styles of Felco sheaths for your pruners. These high quality leather sheaths are designed either to clip to the belt or pocket or to slide onto the gardener's belt. They are designed to hold your Felco shears securely and within easy reach. ☺

• Daylily Walk

Largo Location

Saturday, June 27, 9 am to 1 pm

Tour the daylily fields at our nursery in Largo. Many of the varieties will be coming into bloom and you can compare the many colors and bloom types. Vote for your favorites.

• Twilight Walks

Beltsville Location

Thursday evenings in June at 6:30 pm.

Join our experts for tours of the nursery, pausing at display gardens and introducing effective plants you'll want to know about.

• Herb Workshops

Beltsville Location

Tuition of \$25 includes the use of all necessary materials for each workshop.

• Saturday, August 15, 22, and 29

Aug. 15: **Soap Making** 10 to 12, 1 to 3

Aug. 22: **Paper Making** 10 to 12, 1 to 3

Aug. 29: **Soap Making** 10 to 12, 1 to 3

• 3rd Annual Tomato Taste-Off!

Beltsville Location Only 11 am to 2 pm

Saturday and Sunday, August 22 and 23

Our signature event! We've set aside an entire weekend this summer for our annual opportunity to discover the taste of freshly-picked tomatoes — the best of the old and new.

• Lawn Care Weekend

Beltsville Location

Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 19 and 20

For more information on these events pick up a schedule of the seasons' activities at any Behnke's location.

The Three Behnke Locations:

Beltsville: 11300 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD (301) 937-1100

Largo: 700 Watkins Park Drive, Largo, MD (301) 249-2492

Potomac: 9545 River Road, Potomac, MD (301) 983-9200

For a map of our three locations around the Capital Beltway visit our Website at <http://www.behnke.com/behnkes>



Tropical Romance in Your Yard

—by Mike Bader, Beltsville Houseplant Manager

You have entered a garden lush with plant growth, unusual textures, hot tropical colors, and exotic blooms. You could be on a Caribbean cruise or a Hawaiian honeymoon, but you're not. You're in your own backyard!

You have acquired a taste for the tropics, like me, and desire a place to escape from the predictable hectic pace of your daily routines. You can convert your patio or porch area into a vacation destination. Or you can turn any garden into a private retreat with a relaxed, romantic mood. Let me show you how with some of my favorite tropicals.

By far the most requested tropical plant last year was bougainvillea. We will have more plants and varieties this summer than ever before. For limited spaces try our hanging baskets. For a bolder accent use our larger plants available on trellises and stakes. Bougainvillea bloom heaviest in May and June in a variety of hot, bright colors. Although they prefer plenty of sun, protect them from strong sun exposure in July and August when temperatures exceed 90°. You'll be surprised by another short burst of blooms in September and October before a winter rest period.

I hope by now everyone has seen our lovely vines *Mandevilla* 'Alice Dupont'. Hot pink flowers bloom all summer long till frost. Their medium size trumpet-shaped flowers will attract hummingbirds. Yellow mandevilla is also available due to our customers' requests, as well as *Mandevilla* 'White Delight', which has a pale shell-pink, almost white bloom, and 'Ruby Star', a darker pink, almost red flower.

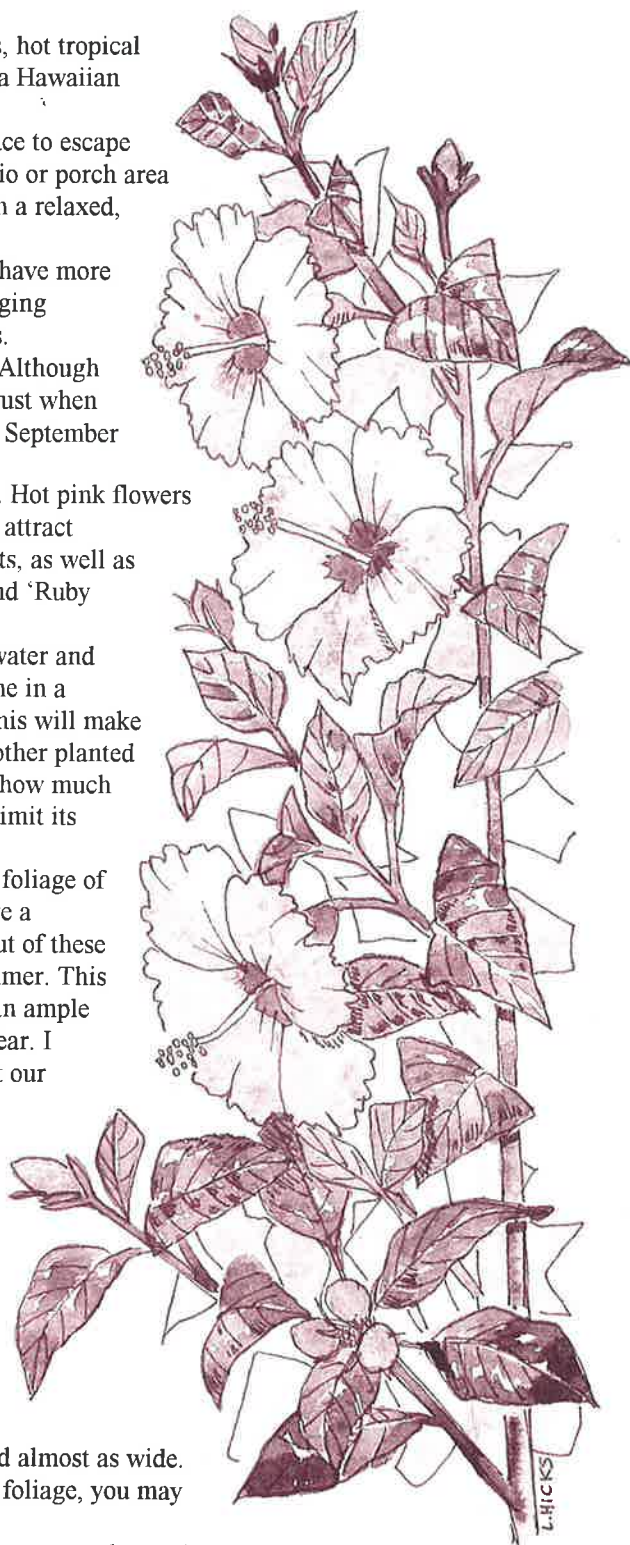
These are vigorous-growing vines requiring full sun and a regular supply of water and fertilizer. I suggest you try two ways of growing this popular tropical vine. Try one in a container, preferably terra cotta, because they don't like to stay constantly wet. This will make it possible to bring this tender tropical indoors during the winter months. Try another planted directly in the garden and you will be amazed how much bigger it will grow and how much more abundantly it will bloom where only the sky and number of frost-free days limit its growth.

Last year's hottest new tropical plant was *Tibouchina* or princess flower. The foliage of this plant resembles the soft fuzziness of the African violet. The leaf margins have a delightful reddish border that matches the emerging flower buds. Soon to burst out of these buds is an intense deep purple flower that continues to bloom throughout the summer. This tropical bush grows to 4 feet tall and stands up well in the summer heat if given an ample water supply. Unfortunately, I expect demand will exceed our supply again this year. I remember a customer last summer had to have this plant so badly that we dug out our trial plants in our display garden!

One of the many pleasures of this business is to watch our customers walk by one of our many display gardens and stop to ask, "What is that and where can I find it?" Boy did I create havoc when I planted a very neat border of *Cuphea* 'Allyson' around one of our display beds and forgot to put an identification sign in the bed. This cute tiny leaf bush, known as Mexican or Hawaiian heather, has a very compact growth habit to 18 inches tall, but produces hundreds of lavender-pink blooms throughout the summer. Plant this in a container or directly in the ground in full sun at 12 inch intervals and enjoy!

For interesting contrast and texture try our variegated ginger plants. These plants prefer protection from midday sun and love rich, moist soil. You'll need to give these beauties some room to grow. Our greenhouse plant grew 10 feet tall and almost as wide. Although you should grow this variety for its beautifully striped yellow and green foliage, you may get a surprise bloom or two toward the end of August.

Be on the look-out for other plants with spiky foliage, like my favorite palm, the sago palm, or large leaves like the dwarf cavendish banana plant growing to 8 feet tall. Of course, don't forget the exotic blooms of our tropical hibiscus, available in a variety of colors as well as many sizes and shapes. *es*



Kids — Cultivating a Budding Gardener

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Department

A couple of summers ago I attempted to interest my three daughters in vegetable gardening. I bought into "The Big Lie" which states that if a child is directly involved in all aspects of growing and preparing a vegetable, she will be more receptive to the actual ingestion of said vegetable. My inspired choice — beets! Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. After all, beets are: about as nutritious as you can get (certain disaster), easy to grow, fun to harvest, and best of all, purple! (With little girls, purple rules.)

I was careful to always refer to them as sugar beets throughout the planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, cleaning and cooking of the vegetable. I had my girls whipped into a veritable frenzy — their little mouths were watering as they each lifted the first forkful to their lips. That's when the whole thing came grinding to a halt. The disappointment of seeing three purple piles of partially consumed home-grown beets on each plate was only made worse by the disillusionment on their stricken faces.

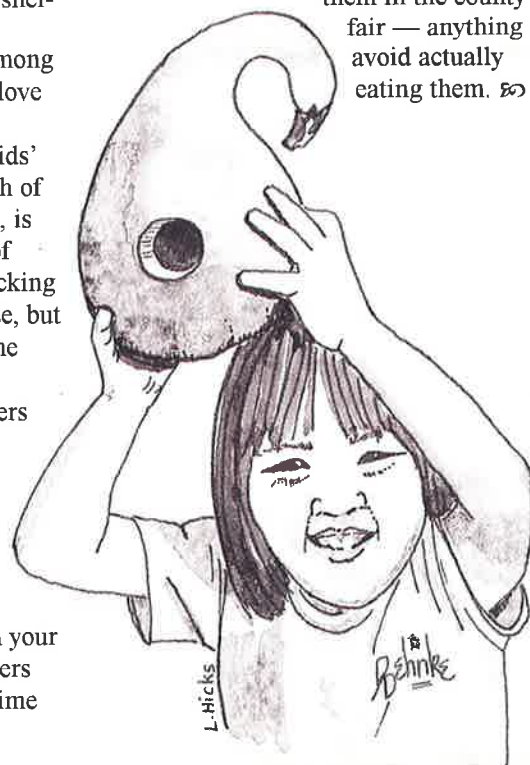
So much for trying to lead them down the garden path. There are no more tricks up this mom's sleeve. Instead of trying to coax them into my world, I've entered theirs. Last spring we all met a few unforgettable characters, including *Luke the Cuke*, *Meanie Zucchini*, and *Colonel Pop*

Corn. These guys represent a few of the offerings of **Kidseeds®**, a new line of flower and vegetable seeds directed at children. The seed packages are colorful and the directions are printed in simple language that even early readers can understand. The selections are not only easy to germinate and grow, but most offer some gimmick that kids find appealing. *Spooky Spumpkin* is a large jack o'lantern variety, and *Birdhouse Gourds* can be hollowed out and hung in a tree to give shelter to birds. *Bachelor Bob*, *Maxi Marigold*, and *B. Cool Coleus* are among the ornamental plants that kids will love to grow.

Don't be surprised to find your kids' enthusiasm is lukewarm during much of the growing process, which, after all, is only the prerequisite to the real joy of growing flowers and vegetables....picking them. My kids love to pick, of course, but they seem to have a very difficult time grasping the concept of "stems." On Easter I sent my three young daughters outside to pick flowers for the table and they came back with a basketful of decapitated daffodils. And when they picked their **Kidseed®** cherry tomatoes last summer, they harvested whole branches along with quantities of unripe tomatoes! Teach your children the proper way to pick flowers and vegetables, and how to tell it's time

for harvesting. Not only will this help them learn to be patient, not your average child's strong suit, but it will prevent disappointment.

With a little luck, you too can experience the satisfaction of seeing your child nearly explode with pride as he struggles to manage an oversized load of freshly picked vegetables. He'll happily offer them to friends and family, virtuously donate them to food banks, hopefully enter them in the county fair — anything to avoid actually eating them. ☺



3rd Annual Tomato Taste-Off...see page 6

Do Not Forward or Return — Address Cor.

The Behnke
NURSERIES CO.
SINCE 1930
Beltsville, MD
11300 Baltimore Ave. (U.S. Rte. 1) 20705
Florist (301) 937-4032

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Rockville, MD
Permit No. 3539