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Behnke Poinsettias!

Visit our web site to see candid shots of the many steps we take to grow the finest poinsettias available. You'll also see full color shots of the many varieties that will be available this holiday season.

www.behnke.com

Fall Is For Planting

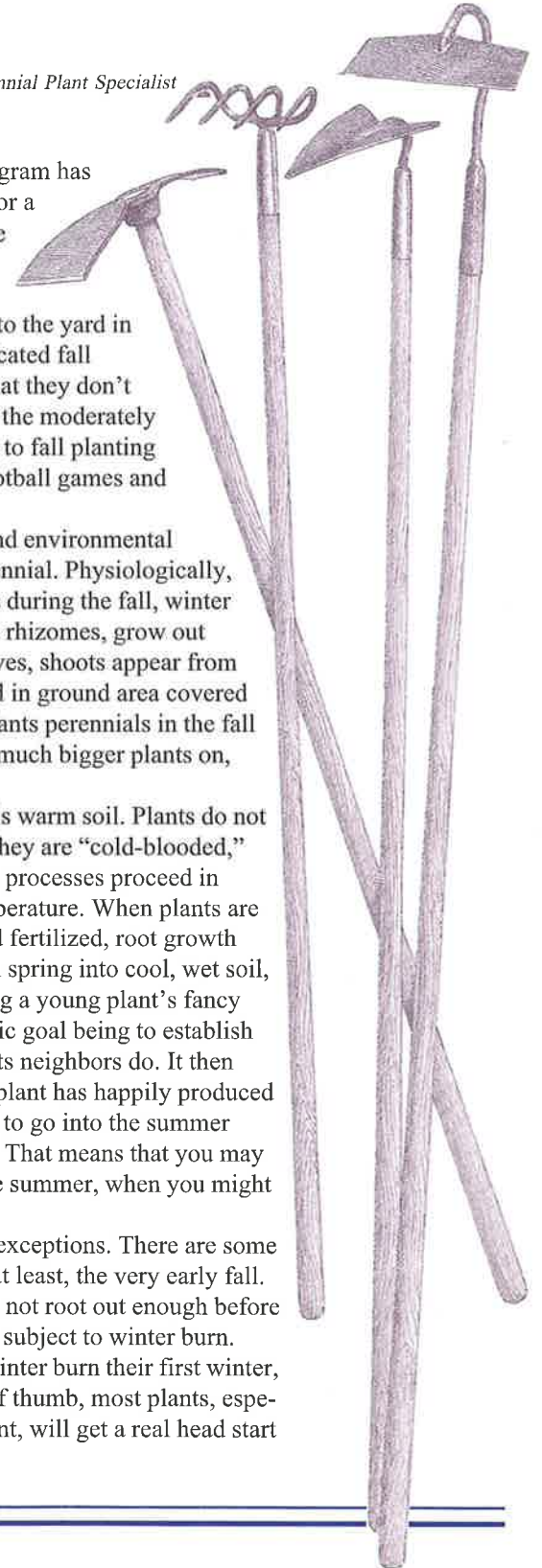
—by Larry Hurley, Perennial Plant Specialist

The "Fall is For Planting" marketing program has been a mainstay of the nursery industry for a number of years, and is directed at enticing the casual gardener (those folks who have been hiding out in air conditioning or at the beach all summer—you know who you are!) back into the yard in autumn. Dedicated gardeners are already dedicated fall planters for a number of reasons. One being that they don't know what else to do with themselves. So, for the moderately dedicated gardener, what advantages are there to fall planting that might coax you away from all of those football games and into your nearest Behnke's?

There are both plant-physiology reasons and environmental reasons for fall planting. Take the humble perennial. Physiologically, much of the growth of many perennials occurs during the fall, winter and early spring, as underground stems, called rhizomes, grow out from the crown of the plant. When spring arrives, shoots appear from these stems, and the plant has perhaps doubled in ground area covered compared to the previous year. Thus, if one plants perennials in the fall instead of the following spring, one will have much bigger plants on, say, May 1st, with a lot more flowers.

An environmental reason for fall planting is warm soil. Plants do not regulate their temperatures as mammals do—they are "cold-blooded," as it were. Within limits, all of their metabolic processes proceed in proportion to the surrounding air and soil temperature. When plants are planted into warm soil in the fall, watered, and fertilized, root growth proceeds rapidly. By contrast, when planted in spring into cool, wet soil, the result is a slower start. In addition, in spring a young plant's fancy first turns to shoot growth—the plant's genetic goal being to establish its turf and get optimal light exposure before its neighbors do. It then starts to produce roots. Since our fall-planted plant has happily produced roots during the fall, it may be better prepared to go into the summer months than its more recently planted cohorts. That means that you may not have to spend as much time watering in the summer, when you might rather be at the beach or indoors.

As with all rules in nature, there are some exceptions. There are some plants that are better planted in the spring, or at least, the very early fall. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as hollies, may not root out enough before the ground freezes in winter, and they become subject to winter burn. Leyland cypress very frequently suffer from winter burn their first winter, especially when planted in fall. But as a rule of thumb, most plants, especially deciduous plants or those that go dormant, will get a real head start when planted in the fall. ☺





Perennials Sleep, Creep, Then Leap

— by Steven J. Mott, Seasonal Sales Plant Specialist

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Planting perennials in the fall makes perfect sense. The days are shorter and cooler and there is generally more rainfall. These factors contribute to healthy, well-adjusted plants. During the first season a perennial is planted there is usually little visible progress. In actuality, the plant is busy becoming established in its new environment and only seems to "sleep." This process is quite important for the plant, and fall is the best season for it to occur. The warm soil, cool air and shorter days trigger root growth in perennial plants, which in turn hastens the establishment period and helps the plant to weather the winter and meet the spring ready to grow. In contrast, spring-planted perennials must soon face the hot summer, which can be an extremely stressful time for all plants, especially those that have been newly planted. Furthermore, spring weather conditions encourage foliar growth rather than root growth — which denies the plant its establishment period, or "sleep."

When summer temperatures rise above 85°F, plants reduce their growth rate in order to reduce transpiration and conserve moisture. If a plant is not established before the oppressive heat arrives the odds increase that it may fail. And when a plant must endure the stress of prolonged heat, it is more susceptible to insect damage and disease. It may take several seasons for a plant to overcome the effects of one episode of severe stress. And of course, some do not survive.

Fall-planted perennials break dormancy in spring and grow more vigorously than their newly-planted counterparts. The first growing season most perennials do not take off like the legendary beanstalk, but instead grow at a slow and steady rate, or "creep." Actually, big things are happening underground, and by their third season...jump back! This is obviously the "leap" phase of perennial plant growth. Some species are more dramatic than others, but most gardeners agree once their perennials become established the growth rate accelerates.

Plant your perennials early in the fall or in late-summer when evening temperatures begin to cool. That's around mid-September in our region. This is also an excellent time to divide perennials, and plant pansies, spring-flowering bulbs, woody plants and much more. It is important to plant as early in the fall as possible to allow for adequate root growth before winter. And remember that good planting practices should still be employed. Water thoroughly at planting time and continue to water regularly throughout the fall. It is especially important that plants' roots are watered well before freezing temperatures affect the soil. Last year the drought continued into November, still a period of active growth for plants. Products such as Roots® and Plant Starter® are highly recommended. These products encourage root growth and reduce transplant shock. Apply mulch after the ground freezes (usually in December) and pay close attention to temperatures and rainfall. You may still need to water your perennials, especially the newly-planted ones, during the holiday season and beyond. ☞

Advantages to Planting in the Fall

- Plants are well-established before the heat and drought of summer.
- A viable root system is produced to get a head start on the following growing season.
- The cooler temperatures, increased rainfall and shorter days reduce strain on new plants.
- Fall-planted perennials display increased vigor and more abundant blooms in spring.
- The susceptibility to insect and disease damage is reduced.

Container Gardening, Even in Winter!

— by Helmut Jaehnigen, Woody Plant Buyer

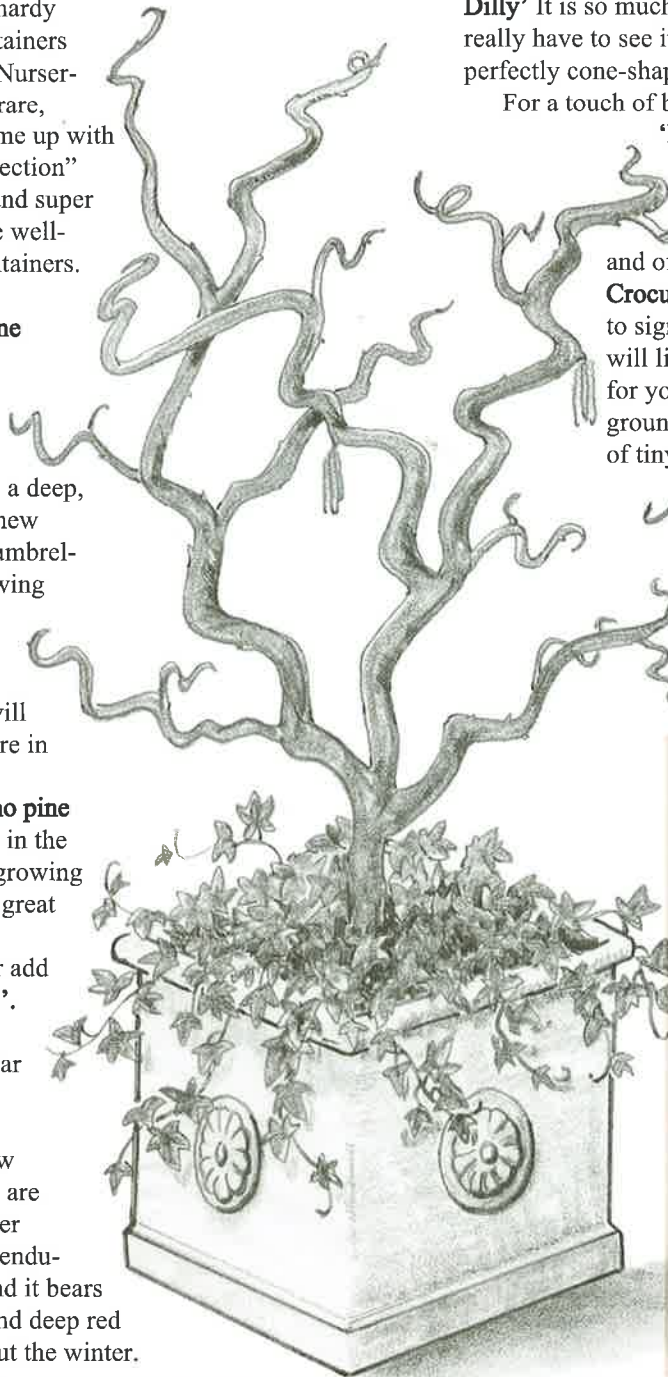
So, you have just returned from your fall vacation to Europe and you recall how the homes are so much closer together. Gardening space near the house is very precious to Europeans — they really love their plants. You saw flower boxes on their balconies or big containers around their homes that were overflowing with flowers. Now you're wondering, what do these people grow in winter? Well, besides pansies and heathers there is not really much that *blooms* in the winter, but you can still have color year round by choosing the right evergreens that are cold-hardy enough to survive in containers through the winter. Iseli Nurseries, which specializes in rare, beautiful conifers has come up with a "Fanciful Gardens Collection" featuring slow-growing and super cold-hardy plants that are well-suited for year-round containers. Here are some favorites:

Japanese umbrella-pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*), is a plant you will enjoy in a reasonably large container for at least 10 years. Its soft needles are a deep, glistening green and the new growth resembles small umbrellas. It has an upright growing habit and eventually becomes a small tree. After enjoying it in a container for years you will want to plant it somewhere in your garden.

The very dwarf **Mugho pine** comes to us from way up in the Swiss Alps. Being slow-growing and cold-hardy it will do great in a container for years.

For a little more color add the **juniper 'Mother Lode'**. It's basically a weeping, golden form of the familiar Juniper 'Blue Rug'.

Cotoneaster 'Streibs Findling' is one of the few broadleaf evergreens that are hardy enough for container growing. The creeping, pendulous habit is attractive, and it bears white flowers in spring and deep red berries that last throughout the winter.



Barberry 'Concord' will add a splash of color with its deep burgundy-red leaves. This plant is also slow-growing and quite hardy. Although it is a deciduous plant, the leaves don't drop until December.

Japanese laceleaf maple features fine filigree-lace red foliage and a gorgeous branching structure. It is winter-hardy, slow-growing and especially lovely.

Everyone knows and loves the **dwarf Alberta spruce**. Iseli Nurseries, however, came up with a variety they named '**Leans Dilly**'. It is so much more petite and absolutely gorgeous you really have to see it. It grows only 1 to 2 inches per year and is perfectly cone-shaped.

For a touch of blue in your planter choose either a '**Montgomery**' blue spruce or a '**Blue Star**' juniper. Both retain their blue color year 'round.

Pansies and **violas** will bloom on and off throughout the fall, winter and early spring. **Crocus** or **dwarf daffodils** would be nice additions to signal the arrival of spring. Perennial **sedums** will literally thrive on neglect and always be there for you. Winter-hardy **creeping thyme** carpets the ground and delights you in spring with its masses of tiny flowers.

There are endless possibilities and combinations of plants. Visit Behnke's any time and meander through our display gardens for inspiration or consult with a member of our staff. We are always happy to offer suggestions and share our knowledge. ☞

Winter Care

Make sure that the container you select is "frost proof" so that it doesn't crack. Place the planted container in a spot which is protected from winter winds, which can cause damage, especially when the soil in the container is frozen. Check the soil weekly to determine whether it needs to be watered. Do not apply fertilizers during the fall or winter to reduce the chance of winter kill. Many plants that are perfectly winter hardy in our area when planted in the ground may die when left in above-ground containers. (Their root systems may not be as cold tolerant as the stems). Always consult a Behnke's horticulturist for recommendations.

Winter in

Once upon a time, winter meant a season of staying indoors, perusing plant catalogs and generally looking out on a landscape of brown, with green where a pine or other evergreen reared out of the deciduous plants around it. I always thought of it as a time when nothing could be done outside, aside from a bout or two of pruning. I'd make my lists and dream...and spring always caught me flatfooted.

Here in the Washington area, the winter has been mild for the past three years. Things can be planted which will provide interest, and even flowers, through all but the coldest parts of January.

The foundation of winter-interest plantings is evergreens or semi-evergreens, and deciduous shrubs with berries which persist through the winter. Evergreens give a year-round screen and, when large enough, can be clipped for a small supply of green to take indoors for holiday decorating.

There are a number of deciduous shrubs and trees grown as much for their interesting contorted branches as for anything else. Among these are the twisted willow, and the twisted filbert (Harry Lauder's walking stick). Other trees and shrubs have a fine bark color or texture. Look at the Stewartias and the bungeana pines for exfoliating (peeling) bark in patches like a

sycamore, or the redbud or yellowtwig dogwoods. If your eye longs for green, most brooms and the twigs of the winter jasmine stay a bright green all winter. So does *Kerria japonica*, which, rather than weeping, gives a wonderful six-foot fountaining vase-shape of light green branches all through the winter. It flowers with single (5-petaled) or double (1" inch pom poms) gold-orange flowers starring the branches in April-May, and sporadic flowers throughout the summer and fall. The Potomac Behnke's (sordid commercial plug) has a nice planted specimen of Harry Lauder's walking stick, but the real places to go — yes, in the winter, that's the idea, remember? — are the National Arboretum or Brookside Botanical Gardens and other such public gardens.

Well and good. Now what do you want for color?

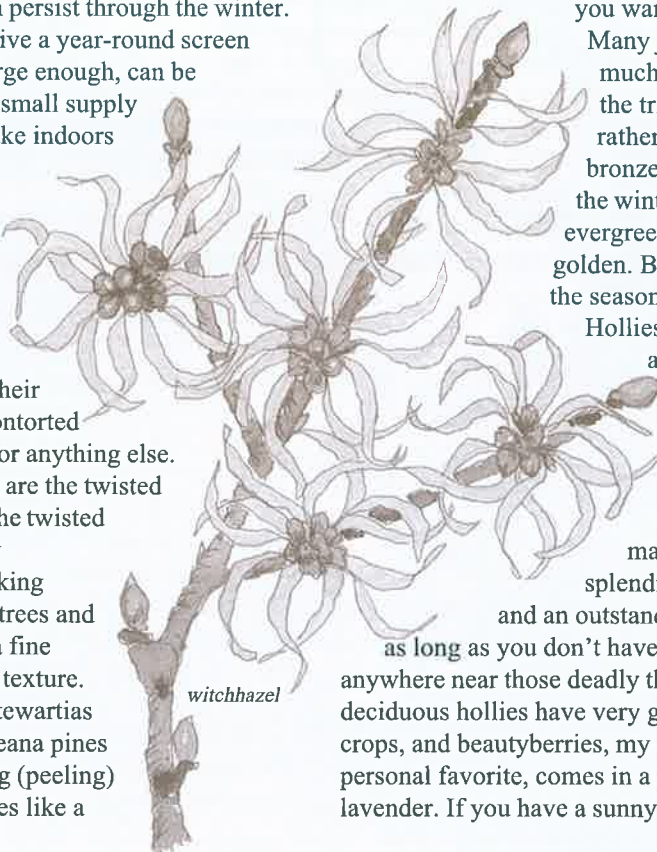
Many junipers, much as I dislike the tribe, turn a rather nice bronze-purple in the winter. Golden evergreens stay golden. But the star of the season is berries.

Hollies come in red and the occasional gold-fruited specimens; pyracantha makes a splendid display and an outstanding barrier

as long as you don't have to reach anywhere near those deadly thorns; deciduous hollies have very good berry crops, and beautyberries, my own personal favorite, comes in a pink-lavender. If you have a sunny spot and

can provide an acid soil, consider winter-green. Only a few inches high, this plant bears little fire-engine-red "apples" about the size of a hazelnut kernel. Bayberry is a small shrub of interest for its grayish-white berries, but like hollies, it has two different sexes, and you need both for the female plants to bear. (With hollies, you often have another compatible holly close by on a neighbor's property and can "cheat" with just a female.) Nandina is also an excellent choice for bright red, winter berries, and is airy and delicate in its growth. The finely divided foliage goes bronze and the berries may remain until April.

Then fragrance. What, you want fragrance in the winter? Well, you can have it...even in a little space. Consider first the sweetbox (*Sarcococca*). An evergreen with small, glossy, dark green, canoe-shaped leaves, and low-growing to about a foot, (there is a taller kind, too) it has insignificant flowers under the leaves, but you'll smell the sweetness all over your yard in the warm spells of the late winter. If you have the space, put in eleagnus — a rather weedy, larger shrub, which blooms mid-October through November here and has the occasional straggler into December. (If you've been driving along the Beltway and gotten a whiff of something extremely sweet around Thanksgiving-time, you've probably passed a clump of eleagnus.) For my money, if you have space for one large winter plant, it should be a witchhazel. Planted where the wind doesn't blow and the sun can shine in winter, it will bloom (often starting at New Year's) and perfume the air any time the sun is warm enough to unfurl its threadlike petals of yellow, red or orange-bronze. Then, if the weather cools, the petals will curl back up again to wait for the next warm spell. We sell a goodly number at Behnke's each



witchhazel

the Garden

year, but for a true preview of what you will get with one, go to the Arboretum, stand near a large bush in bloom, and just breathe... It will also make an extremely dense shade in the summer. In Washington, where the sun beats down, that can be a big plus. Then there is *Daphne odora*. The fragrant blooms come in early spring, and if its cultural requirements are met, a daphne will get to be three feet tall and wide in time. It must have a well-drained yet moist, acid soil with a high organic content, and part-shade.

And on top of this, you can have showy flowers. The flowering plums come early on, fragrant and delicate; some

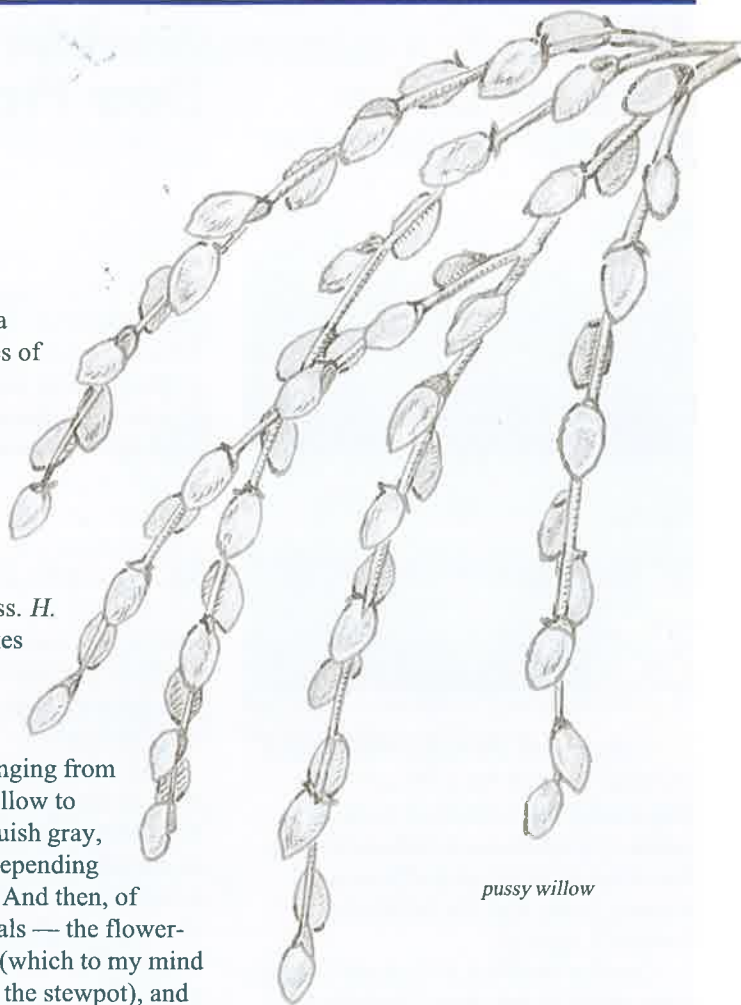


helleborus

flowering quinces bloom early; the camellias can come when you least expect it (there are hardy, fall-blooming types now, but in D.C. and Virginia there are good specimens of the spring-blooming camellias...we're at the northern end of their range — you pay your money and you take your chance...but they're worth it.) Winter jasmine will bloom far earlier

than forsythia, and has a similar habit. Hellebores of various types are good, and the foliage of some is evergreen. *H. niger*, the Christmas rose, can actually bloom in late December, with pure white flowers about three inches across. *H. corsicus* has frothy spikes of little green-white blooms, and the incredible *H. orientalis* hybrids have blooms ranging from pure white to pink to yellow to red-purple, to a slate-bluish gray, with or without spots, depending on the individual plant. And then, of course, the winter annuals — the flowering cabbages and kales (which to my mind look like refugees from the stewpot), and the pansies which, when planted in the fall, will bloom like fools until the hard freezes in January, and anytime thereafter when the air has been unseasonably warm for a few days. If, while planting your pansies in the fall, you also thought to put in some bulbs, the erantis, with its yellow blooms, and the white snowdrops, will both come through for you reliably in January, followed in February by the species crocus, which are the small ones that give you that first flash of color along the sidewalks in a sunny spot.

For the early spring and for forcing in the house, nothing beats pussy willows. They like full sun and moisture, they grow large, and are not for the smallest of city gardens, but if you have the space they're the easiest things in the world. More often than not, at least these past years, they show bits of gray fur starting with the first warm spell. My personal favorite is the Japanese pussy willow, larger than the old-fashioned and just as easy.



pussy willow

And in every winter, there are those cold and miserable days when no power on earth would tempt you outdoors. Curl up at these times with your gardening catalogs. And when you've made your lists... call Behnke's! By then we should have a good idea of what we will be carrying in the spring, and for what price. Often we will have the same exact plants already potted up, growing and ready for you, usually by the second or third week of March... This lets you see what a plant you've seen in the catalog actually looks like and choose which ones you want, and also avoids the possibility of shipping damage. Our plants are hardened off, too. You know how important that is if you've ever planted mail order plants outdoors and subsequently watched them freeze. Call us! We're here to help. ☞

— by James Dronenburg, Plant Specialist,
Potomac

Meet: Carolyn Dixon



Customers at our new Potomac store on River Road all know Woody Plant Department Sales Manager Carolyn Dixon. Carolyn came to Behnke's when the company acquired the Potomac Nursery, along with the buildings, inventory, and cat.

Carolyn was born in England (Hampshire, about 50 km. from London). She moved to the United States in 1983, with her husband and two sons. Her English accent (which just oozes "gardener") makes you feel like you are about to step into the conifer collection at Kew Gardens. Her ten years of experience working with woody plants in the Washington area give our customers the informed service that they have learned to expect from Behnke Nurseries.

Carolyn says she has very little "free time" because she enjoys her job so much. However, she also enjoys gardening, and hiking—especially around parks, gardens and nurseries, looking for new and interesting trees and shrubs. Other interests include choral singing, and yoga, an interesting combination of vocal and silent relaxation techniques.

Carolyn would be delighted to have you visit and check out her selection of trees and shrubs at Behnkes in Potomac.

Next stop...London!!

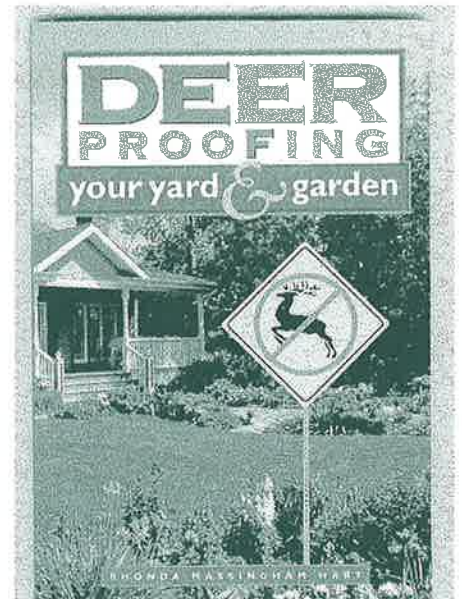
Book Review: Deer Proofing Your Yard & Garden

Deer damage to gardens is becoming a more serious problem every year, as deer populations increase and suburban expansion puts more and more people into contact with nature. This book will not only give you, the embattled gardener, many tools to encourage the deer to feed somewhere else, but will also arm you with many interesting facts that will make you the toast of neighborhood get-togethers. ("Well, ya know Bob—those deer eat seven pounds of leaves a day! No wonder your hostas disappeared! And they have scent glands on their feet. Once a deer comes into your yard, others smell the trail and follow. Soon it's a little deer freeway. And...hey, where did everybody go?")

The author discusses the pros and cons of all of the currently-available repellents, both homemade and commercial. She has an extensive list of plants that deer tend to avoid if there is a choice (note that many of the species listed are west coast plants not suitable for this area). For our more rural folk, there is an extensive chapter on fencing. (That is, erecting fences, not dueling with deer.) Sections on deer biology and behavior will give you a better feeling for why a repellent might or might not work, or might work under some conditions and not others.

This is a short book with a lot of information—you should be able to read it in a couple of hours.

If you are encountering deer damage, the book will pay for itself in the time and money you save by not planting improper plants or applying ineffective or poorly-timed repellents. *✂*



Deer Proofing Your Yard & Garden
Rhonda Massingham Hart
Storey Books, Pownal, VT 05261
155 pages, Softcover

Dutch Bulb Day

Be sure to join us for Dutch Bulb Day, Saturday, October 2, 1999, at all three Behnke locations. There will be interesting exhibits and short topics presented throughout the day (every hour on the hour from 10AM to 4PM). We'll cover topics such as planting and care, selecting bulbs that are "deer and rodent proof," planting bulbs in containers for indoor forcing or outdoor enjoyment, bulbs that come back reliably year after year, pleasing combinations, and bulb "companion plants."

Behnke Nurseries Celebrates 70th Anniversary in 2000!



Albert Behnke stands proudly before his first delivery truck. The year is 1930.

As we make plans for a yearlong celebration of our 70th anniversary in the year 2000, we would greatly appreciate any stories or reminiscences you, our customers and friends, might have of Albert and Rose Behnke, the early years of Behnke Nurseries, or gardening successes (even failures) you might have had with Behnke Nurseries.

You can email to behnkes@ari.net, write us at:

Post Office Box 290,
Beltsville, Maryland 20705,
or call and speak with our Managing Editor, Judith Conway, at 301.937.1100. We would really love to hear from you—and maybe use one of your stories during our anniversary celebration.

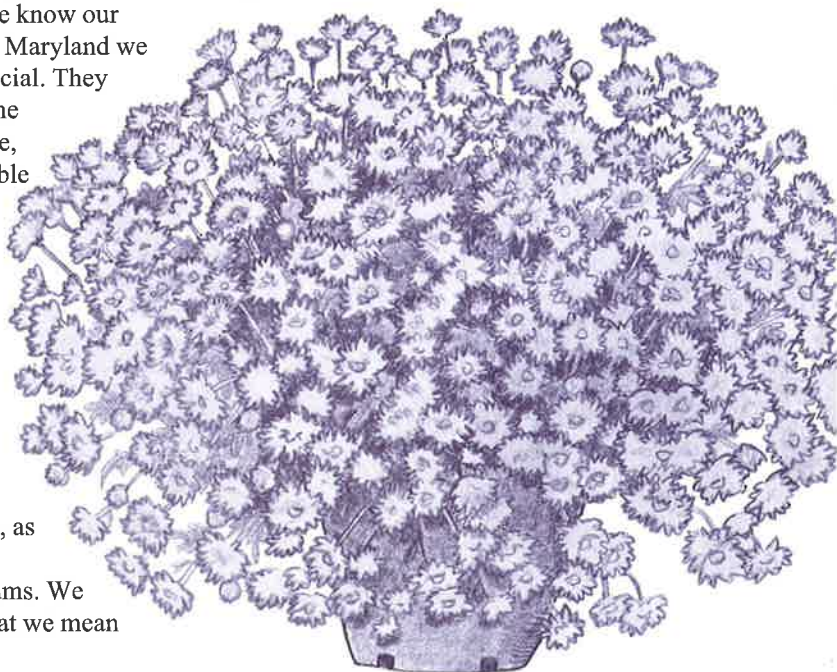
Belgian Mums

— by Randy Best and Marian Parsley

Most of us at Behnke's are avid gardeners like you, but with the advantage of being able, in the course of our jobs, to keep up on the late-breaking news in the world of plant discoveries and hybridization. We are constantly in search of new plants and new varieties that we simply must have — and we know our customers will love them, too. On a recent expedition to western Maryland we discovered a new variety of garden mum that was truly extra-special. They are known as Belgian mums, and chief among their charms are the masses of flowers which completely cover the rich, green foliage, forming a perfectly-shaped mound of color. The plants are flexible and the flowers are "squeezeable," which is fortunate, because strange as it may sound, one is compelled to hug and pet these adorable plants.

Behnke Nurseries introduced Belgian mums with a limited number of varieties last year, and they quickly sold out. This fall we have expanded our collection, and you'll find varieties that bloom early, mid- or late-season, so you can prolong the display for months. In addition, you can choose from several different flower forms, including daisies and anemone-types. Because of their diminutive height, these mums are excellent in town house gardens, planters and window boxes, along walks and driveways, as edging for fall borders, and in rock gardens.

We are really excited to offer these endearing new garden mums. We know they'll soon become a favorite — and you'll know just what we mean when we ask: Have you hugged your mum today? ☺



The Gardener's Holiday Shop

— by Judith Conway, Graphics and Advertising Director

Behnke's seasonal Christmas Shop has undergone a complete make-over this year, and we think you'll be very pleased with the results. When we open on Friday, November 19, the eve of our 70th anniversary year, you'll find a new shop filled with fabulous gardening gifts and related items, including glorious amaryllis, hyacinths and paperwhite narcissus in a wide variety of planters, herbal and boxwood topiaries, and wonderful gifts for the beginning and experienced gardener alike. And, in late November, we'll have our usual excellent selection of freshly-cut Christmas trees, living 'Memory Trees,' fresh garlands, ropings, swags, wreaths, mistletoe and other natural holiday decorations. Our focus has returned full-circle to where we began in 1930 — to the magic of living plants and gifts for those who care for them.

Behnke Nurseries' Christmas Shop was started in 1966 by Sonja Behnke Festerling. It was one of the first garden center Christmas Shops in the Washington, D.C., area. Ele Behnke later joined forces with Sonja and shaped the shop into a Washington

tradition — a unique place where one could be certain to find exquisite decorations and ornaments made with care by skilled artisans — ornaments that reflected the cultures from which they originated.

As Behnke Nurseries grew, the Christmas Shop grew and added a wide range of products that reflected the changing tastes of our customers and the changing world markets. In the past few years Sonja and Ele have felt that the commercialization of Christmas and the mass-production of formerly handmade decorations was making our Christmas Shop indistinguishable from so many others. They decided that a complete re-do—and a return to our roots—would make a wonderful beginning for the celebrations of our 70th year!

Come out and join us — you'll be certain to find unique decorations and gifts for your home, friends and family. ☞



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