



FRIENDS OF COOLEY GARDENS **newsletter**

FOCG Annual Meeting and Guest Lecture

Please join us for a fun night of garden talk and refreshments!

where

Scott Center, just east of the Cooley Gardens parking lot.

date

Tuesday, Jan 17, 2006

time

7:00 p.m.

for more information
call Peggy Casey; 339-3638

Sexy New Garden Perennials that you Can't Live Without
Eric Stinson will update us on what's new and more interesting than you've ever purchased before - his favorites and the latest and greatest introductions.

Classic Clematis and Other Traditional and Modern Vines for Your Garden

Ann Hancock from MSU's Horticulture Dept. will showcase the best of recent breeding and give details on culture and care of vines for your garden.

Clematis: Queen of the Climbers

BY ANN HANCOCK



PHOTO BY ANN HANCOCK

I love Clematis for a number of reasons, and I hope I can excite you about them, too.

First of all, they are very easy vines to grow. With a little attention to culture, after only a few years, you can get a big, lusty blossoming vine that will truly be a jaw dropper and incite serious envy among your neighbors and gardening friends. Second, there are many different species and cultivars to choose from and among these are species that bloom from early spring right through October, giving you a very long garden season. Third, many of them have very ornamental seedheads in the winter to give you something to look at during

our interminable Michigan winters. They also combine well with many other plants. Finally, and this hardly needs mentioning, they are very beautiful, and some are even fragrant! I'll be discussing seven species that should do well for us here in Mid-Michigan, as well as the cultural guidelines I practice to ensure a reliable blooming show each and every year. ☺

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ERIC'SgardenJOURNAL

BY ERIC STINSON

ERIC P. STINSON

Hello, and how have you all been since the last time we spoke? Now you're thinking "does he think we are speaking directly"? Then you think, "he should increase the Prozac."

I do however try to imagine this writing as if it were a conversation on some level; perhaps only conversational in tone. Sort of? "Whatever, whatever", as my 6-year old daughter says.

There are many ways to tell that the gardening season is about over. I'm headed out shopping for cold weather clothing today. Since the days are so much shorter and the sun so much lower in the sky, winter protection for things recently planted is in progress. The holding area is very empty, clean, slightly reconfigured, and almost ready for spring. Bean pods from the locust tree are falling by the bushels covering the ground.

You will be pleased to note the removal of Barberry hedges just inside the east gate, both north and south sides of the formal panel. Barberry, FYI, is an invasive plant in Michigan. Birds eat the little red seeds and deposit them as necessary. Some varieties though are fruitless or nearly so; and some are sterile. Barberry can be grown in deep shade and therefore becomes a woodland weed. It is illegal in all of Canada! There exists a Michigan invasive plant group involved in identifying the bad actors. Their website

is: www.forestry.msu.edu/mipc. Anyhow, my Barberry hedges were indeed bad actors, requiring three and four shearings per season; functioning as a hedge and seeding themselves prolifically. There must be a better way say I, and indeed, there is! Chainsaw pruning followed by a good herbicide! Poof! Gone! The Barberry hedge, aka, *Berberis* 'black hole' is replaced by a more civilized Boxwood.

**“chainsaw
pruning
followed by
a good
herbicide . . .
Poof! Gone.”**

What is lovely about Boxwood is that it only asks for (in this case) an annual shearing, in March or April, and can then be allowed to "fuzz up" through the summer. A robust variety might want a second light shear in July-August. Two varieties were used on this planting: Korean Box (grey green) for the long straight line of plants on both sides of the panel, and very hardy dark green English (*B. Suffraticosa*) variety for the semi circles at the west end of the hedge. Both plants are period correct. So, great beauty,

period correct, and much less work besides!

I love hedges and the act of shearing them, but hedges that are major garden features come from an era when labor was cheap and available. Many hedges then are an anachronism, belonging to another place and time. You can do a very nice placement by investigating plants and choosing something that is the right size and shape; without shearing. Many things will grow into just the right solution, symmetry, density; growth rate and so on. I am thinking about *arborvitae* varieties for hedging that would form a "hot dog" shape. 'Tiny Tim' would probably be 2 feet at 10 years and a perfect globe. Perhaps plant on one foot centers. 'Linesville' a.k.a. 'Mr. Bowling Ball' is round, with fine prickly foliage and a very interesting green grey color. 4 x 4 feet in ten years, and no shearing. Either would be very good as an unsheared hedge. A taller planting of the *Arrowwood viburnum* 'Blue Muffin' about 6 feet would fill out to be a lovely informal hedge with flowers, fall color, and blue berries. Please don't think all hedges need shearing, i.e., very sharply defined outline. Loose and easy on the eye and heart is just fine; symmetry is only one possible goal. At my house, I am working on screening out my neighbors' existence with an *arborvitae* planting of eight distinct varieties, mostly pyramidal, some colored, some round, all

dwarf. Throw in some Boxwood, Holly, or other evergreens and play with spacing and relationships. Using just three or four varieties will give you more formality. Hedge, screen, border are all parts of a continuum, using plants to separate one area from another. There are probably many ways to describe all of this and to accomplish it. An indispensable notion is that tight and symmetrical doesn't have to mean shearing, just choosing the right plant. This reminds me of conversations about roses with 'rose phobia' in evidence. Choosing the right plant solves phobias. Hedge phobia happens for me at about hour 75 of shearing. I am looking hard at alternatives right then, especially since someone stole the ladder used for elevation, and I am shearing about eye level on my tiptoes. Not being a ballet dancer, this is taxing.

At the Holiday Season, I begin to think about what to choose for next year's plant sale. Our customers seem to want things that are new in the market place and are "sexy" in one way or another. They also want the cream of the crop from unexplored genera; ferns come to mind. Folks seem to be less interested in woody plants, vines, or stuff that no one is even remotely aware of. In addition, I am thinking about next year's plants because I have to give a talk at the annual meeting about those that you cannot live without. My preferences at this point are recently domesticated American natives (of course), and here are a few prime examples. Big jump recently in the use of cultivated panicums, i.e., switch (switch grass), seen

even in a landscape at the Meridian Mall (of all places)! Pretty much indestructible, very tolerant of heat, drought and so on, and readily available in about ten cultivated varieties. My recent favorites are 'Northwind'; unequivocally upright and steel blue at about 6 feet—wonderful plant architecture. Very exciting and a first rate replacement for C. 'Karl Foerster. The other plant is P. 'Dallas Blues' with very wide leaf blades, 2 feet flower panicles, and shades of blue and purple in the foliage. At about 5-6 feet in height and 3-4 feet in width, this would be zonker in a mass planting. Please consider these panicums in place of the many cultivated miscanthus.

Other examples are the species and varieties of false sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*. Imagine a self-sowing butterfly magnet that also doubles as a bird feeder in the fall! The species will happily naturalize in moist or dry soil (how handy). Cultivated varieties include 'Summer Nights', golden yellow flowers with a mahogany center, dark red stems, and red tinged foliage. 'Ballerina' with many golden semi double flowers, blooms July through September and is widely regarded as the **best perennial sunflower**. That would put it in the foremost tier of all herbaceous perennials. Really! You heard it here.

Phlox 'Blue Paradise' is really amazing because it really is blue. Really! The color morphs from a good strong medium blue in the morning to a purple with red edges in the afternoon. This went on for at least eight weeks last summer. Wonderful color, mildew resistant, and one of the three or four best tall garden phlox I have seen or grown (out of 20?) The others are 'Franz

Shubert', Robert Poore' and 'White Admiral' (or David). By the way, a white seedling showed up on the garden, which looks as good as either of the last two. I call it 'Lynette' or 'Netty' after my wife, sometimes 'Emma' or 'Nell', the names of my two daughters.

Phlox 'Ending Blue' might be similar to 'Blue Paradise'. Here is a description of the color. "Dark purple buds open to light purple flowers with a darker lavender blue overlay. Reddish pink eye zone." From the 2005 Walters Garden catalog. A mouthful, eh?

Heucheras have probably been over bred. They are beginning to fall into the Iris, Hosta, and Daylily dilemma of being fancier's plants that mostly look alike. Coral Bells interestingly are less reliable in the garden than the three mentioned above, many just are not strong enough to thrive in anything less than ideal conditions. Sorting all this out is not easy. What works for you may not work for me. I have failed with some plants, like Montrose Ruby, which is usually described as very dependable. I remember a time where it seemed as if any one of the 'Coral Bells' was very easy to grow. Perhaps there has been a level of commercial seduction? Anyway, here are a couple that are easy and dependable for me. 'Frosted Violet' does have violet tones in the foliage and is robust. *H. villosa* 'Autumn Bride' is very reliable in dry shade under conifers. 'Caramel' looks like a hybrid of *H. villosa* and 'Amber Waves' and seems more reliable than the above (again, only in my

(Continued on page 4)

Eric's Journal

(continued from page 3)

experience). 'Caramel' colors up prettily with cooler weather, and still looks good on December 1. Walters Gardens has 29 varieties of *Heucherella* available. Whole 'lotta overkill. Oh sorry, add in the seven new *Heucherella*, and the nine closely related *Tiarilla* and you have something like a whole bunch of hosta hybrids.

Almost through, almost through. Ok! The garden was very lucky this summer to have had the help of several General Motors/UAW jobs bank folks. David Dickhaut, past president FOCG, made this happen and the UAW people who manage the bank have been more than helpful. You will probably never meet them, but I want to mention them by name. Dave Demerau, Greg Hamilton, Bob Gavin and Kyle Stahl were great help and good companionship. Between the four, they have worked in the garden from May until now, into December.

Lastly, pulling together as a people WE CAN DO the earnest work of the stewardship of our planet. Every little bit helps; it all counts for something. For many Americans, Katrina was the "tipping point". As the facts become more obvious, a warmer ocean, a melting pole, and thawing tundra, changes in the Gulf Stream, all of the other forms of environmental degradation merge into a fabric, and we really begin to see it now. What sounded passé a year ago is not any longer. We are doing great damage to our home. Let's support each other in our everyday ways to slow down and eventually stop (this nonsense). Thanks for listening.☺

Article Review BY ERIC STINSON

Rule Breaking Roses by Peter Schneider

Horticulture, Feb. 2006, pg.44

Peter Schneider has been co-editor of the *Combined Rose List* since 1992. He is also the author of *Peter Schneider on Roses* and edits the newsletter *American Rose Rambler*. He grows 1,200 rose varieties in Portage County, Ohio. *Rule Breaking Roses* is an interesting article by a guy with great breadth of experience in growing roses.

The down side of this article is the premise. "Outside the rules" in this article means really good plants might be overlooked because they do not seem to fit into the standard system of classifying roses (the Floribunda, hybrid tea and so on). Over time it becomes apparent that when you have cluster flowered hybrid teas and single bud long stem Floribundas, something is amiss with this way of seeing things. Neither term means much, or has any scientific basis. Clusters of flowers occur in all the classes, as do displays dominated by a single bloom. Miniatures have just slightly larger counterparts in patio roses. Climbers may not climb if your zone is too cold. Pretty confusing right? Really, just enough so to warn many people off roses altogether.

What IS most useful about this article is that Peter has grown every plant he discusses. Some of the information he passes on is of gem quality. "For most of the summer in my zone 5 garden with the 'McCartney Rose' you cannot even see the foliage because of the many blooms". "One of the best one bloom per stem Floribundas (Floribunda seems to mean flowers in some sort of cluster) is 'Sheila's Perfume'. It is almost never out of bloom".

Mr. Schneider then riffs on what is wrong with miniature roses. "Straggly uneven growth, powdery mildew, too few and or outsized blooms" and so on. Great information, most useful, and he recommends the "brilliant exception": which is 'Simon Robinson' and lists its qualities; constant bloom, disease resistant, perfectly proportioned. This is the kind of crucial information that you will need to make a good choice of a rose in this "class".

This article concludes with several paragraphs on 'David Austin' roses. One of which, 'Windrush', meets the definition "which of these roses does not belong?" Mysteriously, he does not define what makes an Austin rose an Austin rose. What he does quite well, however, is to describe 'Windrush'. "An eagerness to grow in difficult conditions, very good health, scent, beautiful color, excellent repeat." This is what I want to know about a rose. He also relates that 'Windrush' is better for him than its immediate ancestor 'Golden Wings'. Now the pieces really fall together — 'Golden Wings' in my mind is rose royalty. The color is a faultless cream yellow, it is single, and the stamens are a wonderful golden yellow tinged ruby. I am not sure, how any rose could be "better" but as long as Peter likes 'Golden Wings' I like Peter.

Check out his article; I think you'll like Peter Schneider too. ☺

Editor's Note: I read this article too, and was delighted to see photos included of two of MY favorites— 'Sally Holmes' and 'French Lace.'

Peaceful and Beautiful Haven Here in the Heart of the City

BY GLADYS BECKWITH, PH.D.
*Executive Director,
Michigan Women's Historical
Center & Hall of Fame*

The Michigan Women's Studies Association began working on the renovation of the Cooley Haze House, future home of the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame, in 1979. At that time, the weeds in some of the garden beds were nearly waist high! We opened the Center in 1987 and over the years, I have watched the gardens become increasingly lovely. Each season of the year has a special attraction. The walk from the parking lot to the Center is a wonderful display of magnolias and dogwood in the spring. In the fall, the gold and red foliage on the walk is a treat to the eyes.

The peonies are in bloom at the time of our "Picnic on the Lawn" (mid June) and guests enjoy them tremendously. Midsummer is the time of the spectacular annual display—each year a different theme and a different color.

All of us who work at the Center say that we are working in a park and we truly are. I looked out my window one day to see five deer walking down the path toward the river! Our staff and I have enjoyed many picnic lunches in the Gardens and they are a wonderful place for a quiet evening walk.

Our community is indeed fortunate to have this peaceful and beautiful haven. Thanks to all who have made it possible and a special thanks to Eric Stinson who has designed all of this. ☺

Point of View

BY VICCI MARRENO KNOWLTON,
MPA, JD

*Office Administrator,
Michigan Women's Hall of Fame*

Everyday when I arrive at my job, I am blessed with a 180-degree view of the Cooley Gardens and Scott House. My desk is located in the former "sun room" of the Cooley Haze House, home of the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame.

Shortly after I arrived here, some three years ago, my "boss" Gladys told me that we sit at the convergence of two rivers, and she stated, "when two rivers meet, it is a very special place with *extraordinary energy*—some even say it is good luck".

When visitors arrive at my desk, they are amazed at the view, which is framed by nine French windows on two sides. Indeed, it does get warm in the summer and cool in the winter months, but it is truly a treat to the eyes! ☺

Do you have any words of gardening wisdom, images of gardens or information that you'd like to share with other FOCG members? Send information (electronic formats only) to fran@group230.com

boardREPORT

The best of New Years to you. In 2006, we look forward to:

- an informative annual meeting with Eric — where else can you listen for free to practical advice and have your questions answered as you begin to plan your summer garden!
- additional participation at our board meetings. Remember, you don't have to be on the board to come to a meeting. We're always looking for fresh ideas or just listening ears as we plan for the plant sale and how to make the Gardens more visible to the community. Board meetings are the 4th Tuesday of each month. If you would like an e-mail reminder before each meeting, send a note to Peggy Casey Danandpeg@aol.com or Rich Schaberg Rschaberg99@yahoo.com
- the best plant sale yet. With everyone's help, it just gets better each year! ☺

FRIENDS OF COOLEY GARDENS Membership/Renewal Application

name _____ phone _____

address _____

membership level: Individual \$15.00 Student \$10.00
 Household \$20.00 Senior Citizen \$10.00
 Benefactor \$75.00

I do not wish to become a member at this time, but would like to donate \$_____.

I am interested in: Garden Work Plant Sale Fundraising
 Newsletter Public Relations/Membership

Make checks payable to **Friends of Cooley Gardens** and send to:
Friends of Cooley Gardens • P.O. Box 14164 • Lansing, MI 48901

Benefits of Membership: Annual members-only guided tour, Newsletter, Plant Sale Discount

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For more information on Cooley Gardens visit our website at www.cooleygardens.org

calendar OF EVENTS

january

- 17 FOCG Annual Meeting**, Scott Center. 7:15 pm
- 21 MSU Horticultural Gardens Saturday Morning Gardener: Hydrangeas & Viburnums.** 9 am-11am. Preregistration. Class fee \$25. For more information: www.hrt.msu.edu/outreach/SMG120.htm

february

- 18 MSU Horticultural Gardens Saturday Morning Gardener: Designing Small Spaces.** Preregistration required. Class fee \$25. For more information: www.hrt.msu.edu/outreach/SMG120.htm
- 25-26 Greater Lansing Orchid Society Show.** Features judged exhibits plus many orchid vendors. Free admission and parking. MSU Conservatory, Plant & Soil Sciences Building. Saturday, Feb. 25th, noon-5; Sunday Feb 26th, 11-4. For more information: 355-5191, ext.247
- 28 FOCG Board Meeting** 7:15 pm. Contact Peggy (339-3638) for location.

march

- 28 FOCG Board Meeting** 7:15 pm. Contact Peggy (339-3638) for location.



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www.cooleygardens.org