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## Prairie Rose's Garden

Notes from a beginning gardener with sprinkles of poetry and philosophic musings

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2010

### And the Oscar goes to ...

The Academy Awards presentation is a show I always look forward to watching. I guess I'm a little starstruck, because I enjoy seeing all the stars in their designer gowns and waiting for the opening of the envelopes to find out which actors and actresses are chosen as the "best" for this year. The irony is that most years I'm lucky if I have seen even one of the nominated movies.

Oscar Night is still a week away, but gardeners don't have to wait that long to find out who the new stars in the garden will be this year. Several organizations have already announced their winners.



'Zahara Starlight Rose' zinnia has been named as a bedding plant award winner by [All-American Selections](#). When I first saw this photo in a seed catalog, I knew I had to have these zinnias, even before I knew they had been chosen as an AAS winner. You know I love zinnias, and this new rose and white bicolored flower has captured my heart. Some

#### About Me



Rose  
Central Illinois, United States

I am a "late bloomer" when it comes to gardening. Born and raised on a farm, I have returned to my country roots. Recently retired, I am looking forward to being able to do all the things I always wanted to do but never had enough time. That includes gardening, of course!

[View my complete profile](#)

"Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity."

-Lindley Karstens

#### Winter Visitors

of its other winning characteristics, according to AAS:

proven resistance to fungal leaf spot and powdery mildew  
 heat and drought tolerant

"a perfect plant for the novice or experienced gardener because it is so undemanding with a maximum number of blooms." (AAS)

Height and width: 12-14 inches



Another AAS winner is this Gaillardia F1 'Mesa Yellow.' It's touted as the first hybrid blanket flower with a "controlled plant habit and prolific flowering." In other words, it does not get "tall, loose and floppy." Other traits:

- attracts butterflies
- has a neat, mounded growing habit, but can also cascade down the sides of containers
- wind and rain resistant
- blooms earlier than other cultivars
- Height: 16-18 inches
- Width: 20-22 inches



**Summer Visitors**



**Blog Archive**

- ▼ 2010 (14)
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I don't usually plant snapdragons but the new 'Twinny Peach' may change that habit this year. The AAS called it "a snapdragon without the snap." The double flower form also ensures lots of blooms in unique pastel shades. Other winning traits:

- easy to grow
- heat tolerant
- flowers all season
- flower color: pastel shades of peach, yellow, and light orange
- Height: 11.75 inches
- Width: 7.75 inches












In the Cool Season Plant category, this viola took the top award. 'Endurio Sky Blue Martien' is described as having "sky-blue" blooms, though the photo looks lavender to me. Characteristics:

- flowers throughout the winter in the South; provides two-season color in the North
- spreading, mounding habit

- ▼ February (6)
  - [And the Oscar goes to ...](#)
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  - [February GBBD: Deja Vu](#)
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#### My Blog List

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-  [Veg Plotting](#)  
Book Review: Gardeners' World Practical Gardening Handbook

Height: 6 inches

Width: 12 inches

For more information on these four plants as well as the complete list of winners, check out the [AAS website](#). I am starstruck, for sure--I've already ordered seeds for the first three flowers, and I'll be looking for these lovely little violas in the garden center in a few weeks.

And now for the grand finale, the most coveted prize of all--the 2010 [Perennial Plant Association's](#) Plant of the Year. The envelope, please . . .



And the winner is . . . *Baptisia australis*! No award ceremony was necessary to convince me of this plant's winning ways. As soon as I saw masses of these at the Lurie Garden during last year's Spring Fling, I had to have this native plant in my garden. Luckily, I found one last summer at a local nursery, and although it will be awhile before it looks as full as this one at the Lurie, I'm looking forward to seeing those striking violet-blue blossoms this spring.

What do judges look for in choosing the Plant of the Year? Its beauty is important, of course, but also "its durability, suitability to a wide range of climate types, low maintenance, multiple season interest, and easy growing nature."\* *Baptisia*, also known as false blue indigo, has all that and more:

besides blue, other cultivars are available that produce yellow flowers or white (the native Illinois wild indigo, *Baptisia alba*)

takes a few years to reach a 4 x 4 size, but is long-lived  
spring bloomer, good companion with spring bulbs  
after blooming, produces decorative seed pods suitable for dried arrangements

hardy in zones 3-9

"Once established, baptisia is one tough cookie with its drought tolerance and adaptability."\*

13 hours ago

**e** Moments from suburbia  
Preparations  
13 hours ago

**e** Voice in the Garden  
Rufous Hummingbird  
17 hours ago

**e** sweetbay  
The creek in late winter  
17 hours ago

**e** A Corner Garden  
You'd Think it was Spring  
18 hours ago

**e** Dig, Grow, Compost, Blog  
Two More Good Reasons not to Top  
your Crapemyrtles  
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**e** GardenJoy4Me  
What is going on ? wink wink  
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Jersey!  
1 day ago

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Lenten thanks 13  
1 day ago

GB Muse Day - Mar 2010  
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**e** THE VILLAGE VOICE  
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DAY! (FLOWER of the MONTH ~  
DAFFODIL)  
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**e** Thyme for Herbs  
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Red Dirt Ramblings  
Dear friends and gardeners, 2010,  
week one  
1 day ago

**e** Does Everything Grow Better in My  
Neighbor's Yard?  
Garden Bloggers' Muse Day - March  
2010  
1 day ago

**e** May Dreams Gardens  
Dear Friends and Gardeners: March 1,  
2010  
1 day ago



My garden certainly won't win any awards; in fact, as I've admitted before, it's quite a modest garden compared to so many others I've seen on other gardening blogs. But I hope by summer's end to have some of these award-winners taking the spotlight in my garden this year.

\* Images (other than the baptisia) and information taken from AAS website. Quotes taken from the gardening column published in the *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette* and written by Sandra Mason, the horticulture educator with our local Extension Office and a lively, knowledgeable instructor for several of the Master Gardener classes I'm currently taking.

Posted by Rose at [9:00 AM](#)

Labels: [All-America selections](#), [award winning annuals](#), [baptisia](#), [Perennial Plant of the Year](#)

### 23 comments:

[Susie](#) said...

I enjoyed seeing all the award winning flowers. Just the other day I bought some zinnia seed. Of course, they weren't this pictured winner but they'll do.

I have Baptisia but mine doesn't look anything like the one pictured. Maybe in a few years. It's still a baby right now.


[February 26, 2010 9:09 AM](#)  
[ShySongbird](#) said...

I think I preferred these to the other Oscars Rose :) A most enjoyable post and again so nice to be reminded of Summer flowers. I tried to pick my favourites but found I had chosen all of them! The Snapdragon does look particularly pretty though and they always do quite well in my garden, it does look nice with the double flower and the Gaillardia reminds me that mine was absent last year and as they attract the butterflies will be worth replacing, that one sounds nice and compact.

[February 26, 2010 9:37 AM](#)  
[Mr. McGregor's Daughter](#) said...

I've decided I have to grow Snapdragons this year because they can bloom into December. I can imagine that new one paired up with the darkest crimson Snapdragon. I think you will love your Baptisia. I hope you gave it plenty of room, as at maturity, it takes up as much space as a

- [Garden Faerie's Musings](#)  
March Mish-Mash Monday  
*1 day ago*
- [Fairegarden](#)  
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- [The Transplantable Rose](#)  
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*1 day ago*
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- [Ewa in the Garden](#)  
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*4 days ago*
- [Changes with Seasons \(Wendy\)](#)  
Winter isn't over yet!  
*5 days ago*
- [Morning Glories In Round Rock](#)  
SNOW!

 small shrub. I have two of them now, and the foliage is just a great as the blooms.

[February 26, 2010 9:50 AM](#)



[Gail](#) said...

I love the zinnia, too and must have it! I have baptisia seeds to share with you and bekie...You'll have access to them if you are after me in the seed swap or i can send them to you. So you can try and grow more of the beauties. They are, too and I agree with MMD-you will love them and have to have another and another! xogail

[February 26, 2010 10:21 AM](#)



[tina](#) said...

Every garden is an award winner in my book due to the love of the gardener of all of the plants-or of only one plant-it's the connection that is the star in my mind. That being said I love love love baptisia. Mine are small too. Mighty small and I hear it takes about 5 years to get big. I need to add more award winners.

[February 26, 2010 11:50 AM](#)



[joey](#) said...

Indeed, you have some winners, Rose :)

[February 26, 2010 2:17 PM](#)

[rambleonrose](#) said...

I really like the 'Twinny Peach' snapdragon. I think the color is just gorgeous, and the flowers are so interesting! Baptisia was certainly a deserving winner. I added a couple 'Starlites' to one of my borders late in the season, and I'm really excited to see how they do this year!

[February 26, 2010 2:48 PM](#)

[sweet bay](#) said...

I love that blue-violet Viola, what a beauty. The Baptisias are among my favorite perennials, even though I have to go to special lengths to keep them from being devoured by voles.

[February 26, 2010 3:08 PM](#)

[Maggie May](#) said...

I wouldn't bet on your garden not winning an award. It produces some really lovely flowers and shrubs. The snap dragons look lovely but never when I plant them.

[Nuts in May](#)

[February 26, 2010 3:20 PM](#)

[Shady Gardener](#) said...

*6 days ago*



[Lilacs and Roses](#)

*6 days ago*



[Ledge and Gardens](#)

[Wordless Wednesday - February 24, 2010](#)

*6 days ago*



[Sarah Laurence Blog](#)

[Portland Waterfront & Eastern Prom](#)

*6 days ago*



[Ramble On Rose](#)

[Book Review: Year-Round Gardening](#)

*6 days ago*



[ShySongbird's Twitterings](#)

[One Year \(and a bit\) On!](#)

*1 week ago*



[My Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

[Longing for Spring](#)

*1 week ago*



[ROBINS NESTING PLACE](#)

[What a Thrill!](#)

*1 week ago*



[Gardening While Intoxicated](#)

[A pregnant pause](#)

*1 week ago*



[Dung hoe](#)

[Giving the Nest and the Blog a Rest](#)

*2 weeks ago*



[dragonflycorner](#)

[GBBD February 15, 2010](#)

*2 weeks ago*



[Greenbow](#)

[Garden Bloggers Bloom Day - February 2010](#)

*2 weeks ago*



[Garden Girl](#)

[February Bloom Day](#)

*2 weeks ago*



[A Little of this, a little of that](#)

[Thank You](#)

*2 months ago*

[Perennial Garden Lover](#)

[November Blooms \(GBBD 11-15-09\)](#)

*3 months ago*



[tallgrassworship](#)

[A Little Further Explanation](#)

*5 months ago*



[GARDENING ON THE GULF COAST](#)

[peace](#)

*5 months ago*




[Mean Moody Middle-aged Mom](#)

[Fashion Show!](#)

*7 months ago*



[Laura's Gardening Journal](#)

 [Very pretty, Rose. Nice post. Aren't we getting excited that Spring is nearing?? ;-\)](#)

[February 26, 2010 4:33 PM](#)

 [fairegarden](#) said...

Thanks for this appetizer for the oscars, Rose! I like to see the gowns and hairdos and shoes, and have rarely seen the movies as well. Although this year I did see Avatar, but the stars won't be quite the same as on the big screen. Those flowers look yummy, and baptisia was a show stopper at the Lurie, I agree! Of course they probably had a hundred plants of it to make that splash. :-)  
Frances

[February 26, 2010 5:39 PM](#)

 [Lisa at Greenbow](#) said...

I would much rather look at these beautiful flowers than watch the Oscars on tv. I see you have had a red-breasted nuthatch at your feeders. Lucky girl. I haven't seen one yet this year.

[February 26, 2010 6:13 PM](#)

 [Robin's Nesting Place](#) said...

I love zinnias and that one is a beauty!

[February 26, 2010 6:24 PM](#)

[Noelle](#) said...

I love all of the new flowers, but I have a soft spot for Violas. You and I are alike. I love to watch the Oscars, more to people watch since I rarely see the movies up for nominations. I wonder what that says about the movies I choose to see ?

[February 26, 2010 6:40 PM](#)

[Cindy, MCOK](#) said...

I'd love to grow that Baptisia but I'm not optimistic about how they'd fare in my climate. I'll have to do some research.

[February 26, 2010 7:44 PM](#)

 [Rose](#) said...

Susie, according to the articles, baptisia takes several years to reach its potential. Now I'm wondering how old my plant was when I bought it.


ShySongbird, Yes, this snapdragon caught my eye, too. My gaillardia tend to be short-lived, so I'm hoping this one does well here.

MMD, I didn't realize snapdragons could last that long. My

[A Quick and Easy Recipe](#)  
*7 months ago*


[Blossom \(Amy\)](#)  
[Easy Yogurt Berry Smoothies](#)  
*9 months ago*

 [Cosmo's Garden](#)  
[Snow Day](#)  
*11 months ago*

 [Walk Down the Garden Path](#)  
[Vegetable Garden Update - February 2009](#)  
*1 year ago*

#### Labels

[" Parkland College](#) (1)  
[" wildflowers](#) (1)  
["Becky" daisy](#) (2)  
["Black and Blue" salvia](#) (1)  
["blogalong" plants](#) (1)  
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["naked lady" lilies](#) (1)  
["Oklahoma"](#) (1)  
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[baby's breath](#) (1)  
[bachelor's buttons](#) (1)

 baptisia has plenty of room, except there is a burning bush behind it. If it needs a little more space, guess which plant is going to get a severe pruning?:)

Gail, I have one baptisia seed from you in a milkjug already outside, but I'd love to try more! If they all germinate, I could have my own little Lurie exhibit:)

Tina, Thanks for those lovely words. The article said it takes at least three years for baptisia to really shine.

Joey, I like the "old faithful," too, but it's nice to try a few new varieties.

Rose, I'm not that fond of snapdragons, usually, but these look so pretty. It was love at first sight with the "Starlights"!

Sweet Bay, Oh dear, I didn't know voles would attack baptisia--thanks, I'm going to be on the lookout for those little critters now.

Maggie May, Thank you; my garden is small, but I plant it for sheer enjoyment, not any awards:)

Shady, I'm excited that February is finally coming to an end! March may still be wintry, but at least there's a promise of spring.

Frances, I enjoy the gowns and hairdos, too and wondering how they can walk up those stairs in those high, high heels:) I think the Lurie has inspired many of us to attempt our own little mini-Luries.

Lisa, Thank you--now I know I identified this bird correctly in the GBBC! I kept thinking I was seeing a chickadee until I noticed its beak. I've had one or two visit daily for a month or more.

Robin, I've fallen in love with the "Starlight," too.

Noelle, Hubby and I rarely get to the movies these days; I usually wait till they come out on DVD. I usually see more children's movies in the theater than anything else:)

Cindy, Baptisia are supposed to be drought-tolerant and hardy to zone 9, so check them out!

[February 27, 2010 8:13 AM](#)  
[garden girl](#) said...

Those are some great picks Rose!

Baptisias are old favorites of mine - I started a few

[bad poetry](#) (2)  
[baptisia](#) (2)  
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[coneflowers](#) (11)



seedlings last year - hope they come back. I started some 'alba' seeds (from Monica's seed swap,) a couple of weeks ago - I know it will be two or three years before they bloom, but they're such beauties they'll be worth the wait.

[February 27, 2010 12:19 PM](#)

[Sarah Laurence](#) said...



I just saw A Single Man. Colin Firth was nominated for best actor in it, I think. It was visually stunning, well acted and original. I was very moved, but the elderly ladies leaving the theater joked about getting their money back. I enjoyed your floral Oscars. The Baptisia australis remind me of Maine lupines. Lovely!

[February 27, 2010 12:57 PM](#)

[Suburbia](#) said...



Love that sweet little viola face :)

[February 27, 2010 2:46 PM](#)

[donna](#) said...



Rose, I also fell in luv with Starlight Rose Zahara zinnia when I saw the picture in my Jung Seeds & Plants catalog. I've ordered the seeds.

I planted just one baptisia australis last fall. Do you think it will look like the ones at Lurie Garden by this summer?

donna

[February 28, 2010 9:28 AM](#)

[Monica the Garden Faerie](#) said...

Hi Rose, I'm never one to have the latest and greatest of anything first. (And I don't tend to see very many first-run movies, either... I tend to wait and get them free from the library once they're on DVD.) That being said, I do like the zinnia, but the Mesa gaillardia look so much like coreopsis to me that I don't quite see the need to have developed them. Or maybe I'm just cranky. :)

[February 28, 2010 1:32 PM](#)

[Monica the Garden Faerie](#) said...

Hi Rose, the issue with your milk jugs while you're in AZ isn't so much that it will get warm enough for them to sprout, but that the soil \*may\* get a little dry. So shade would help with that. Make sure the soil is plenty wet before you leave. Also, it's funny what you said about me writing user manuals, because that's just what I spent the first 10 years or so of my career doing. :)

[March 1, 2010 8:42 AM](#)

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[Kate](#) said...

That peachy snapdragon is to die for.

I grow a lot of Baptisia in my own garden and just love it's luscious blue color.

[March 1, 2010 11:44 AM](#)

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[hollyhocks](#) (7)  
[Homer Lake](#) (1)  
[Homestead verbena](#) (1)  
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[hostas](#) (2)  
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[iris](#) (3)  
[jack o'lantern](#) (1)  
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[Japanese beetles](#) (1)  
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[Mothers Day](#) (1)  
[mums](#) (6)  
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[nepeta](#) (5)  
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[new puppy](#) (1)  
[nigella](#) (2)  
[oak leaf hydrangea](#) (1)  
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[Odie](#) (1)  
[oleander](#) (1)  
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[Perennial Plant of the Year](#) (1)  
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[plant sales](#) (1)  
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[Portland trip](#) (1)  
[prairie phlox](#) (1)  
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[Qigong](#) (1)  
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[rant](#) (2)  
[redbud](#) (1)  
[redbuds](#) (2)  
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[rosemary](#) (1)  
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[Russian sage butterflies](#) (3)  
[saguaro cactus](#) (1)  
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[Sasha](#) (2)  
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[Spring Fling](#) (3)  
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[surprise lilies](#) (2)  
[swallowtail caterpillars](#) (1)  
[tags](#) (2)  
[Tai Chi](#) (1)  
[Tarzan the cat](#) (7)  
[Tasha Tudor](#) (1)  
[Thanksgiving](#) (1)  
[the "Bean"](#) (1)  
[The Lost Symbol](#) (1)  
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[toad](#) (1)  
[Toby](#) (5)

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[tomatoes](#) (1)  
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[trees](#) (1)  
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[tulip varieties](#) (1)  
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[umbel](#) (1)  
[unusual plants](#) (1)  
[vegetable gardening](#) (1)  
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[VP's dinner challenge](#) (1)  
[walking](#) (1)  
[Wall Street crisis](#) (1)  
[weather](#) (1)  
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[woolly worms](#) (1)  
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[yarrow](#) (2)  
[yellow flowers](#) (1)  
[yellow hollyhocks](#) (1)  
[yellow rocket weed](#) (1)  
[zinnias](#) (5)

#### My Plant "Wish List"

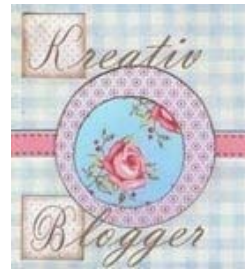
Fiesta del Sol Mexican sunflowers  
 (Marnie)  
 Hamamelis vernalis "Amethyst" (Gail)  
 Salvia "Black and Blue" (Racquel)  
 Witch Hazel (Gail)  
 Calluna vulgaris "Firefly" (Frances)  
 Euphorbia dulcis "Chameleon" (Frances)  
 Pink Muhly grass (Frances)  
 Verbena Bono. (thanks, Cheryl)  
 Cherokee Purple tomatoes (Marnie)  
 Chrysanthemum koreanum (Frances)  
 Xeranthemum (Kylee)  
 Sedum seiboldii (Kylee)  
 Rudbeckia (can't believe I don't have  
 any!)  
 Viburnum  
 Hydrangea "pinky winky" (Joy)

Hellebores (Mr. McGregor's Daughter and Tina)

PPPP (Perfectly pink phlox pilosa) (Gail)  
(more to be added as I remember them!)



Thanks, Shady Gardener!



Thanks, Suburbia!



Thanks, Suburbia!

Sharing The Love



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Thanks, Liz!



Thanks, Suburbia!



Thanks, Beckie!



Thanks, Suburbia!