

Serenity in the Garden

Creating harmony, simplicity and peace in the landscape...



"Making a garden is not a gentle hobby for the elderly, to be picked up and laid down like a game of solitaire. It is a grand passion. It seizes a person whole, and once it has done so he will have to accept that his life is going to be radically changed.
May Sarton

Plant Dreaming Deep, 1968

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2010

Stars of a Fall Serenity Garden - Fountain Grasses - Red Head, 'Prince', 'Princess' and Karley Rose



Karley Rose Pennisetum poolside

In late fall, the fountain grasses stand out. And there are so many to choose from! Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum* sp.) is a graceful, elegant, DEER RESISTANT, sun loving ornamental grass with feathery plumes in summer that persist into fall. Its relatively small size makes it a great plant for containers, rock gardens, borders, foundation plantings, massing, or as a specimen.

There are some 80 species of *Pennisetum*. Most are called fountain grass. Once established, they tolerate heat, humidity and full sun.



Of course with all this wonderfulness there is a down side....certain Fountain grasses are considered invasive....not all, but some. There is a lot of discussion on which varieties are invasive - this species is OK but that one isn't...some people, to be safe, don't buy any. I would counsel you to look in your area to see which ones are no nos....

Nonetheless, the fountain grass is a must for a sunny serenity garden. [Greenwood Nursery](#) describes why this is so:

"Strolling in the garden in the fall and early winter, after the grasses turn their great yellow fall color, there is a calming effect when the slight winter breezes create a gentle rustle in the spent grasses."

Here are some fountain grasses that make for a spectacular autumn landscape:

***Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Red Head'**



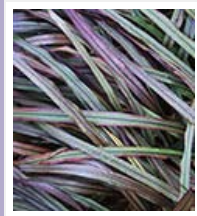
from Great Garden Plants website

A early-blooming cultivar of hardy Fountain Grass, Red Head begins blooming at summer's end and continues into late fall. They have deep purple buds that mature to long lasting smoky-purple plumes, fully 8 inches long. The plants grow to 3 - 4 feet high and wide which is a great size for a border, as a hedge or by a pool. And like all hardy Pennisetums, the blooms dry on the plant and make nice winter accents, catching the falling snow and rustling in the breeze. Zones 5-9. Prune back in early spring.



Looks great with Feather Reed Grass, Blue mist Shrub (Caryopteris), Asters, Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea), Oriental Lily (Lilium) , Sedum (Sedum) , annuals

Pennisetum purpureum 'Princess Molly' PPAF (Princess Molly Dwarf Fountain Grass)



This new, **warm season** pennisetum hybrid, from Dr. Wayne Hannah at the University of Georgia, is a dwarf plant that grows only 14 -20" tall with unique foliage.

The olive green leaves are bordered with purple, and highlighted with a dark black-purple stripe down the leaf center. Pennisetum 'Molly' is a great red purple accent plant for the summer and fall garden. It works well in smaller landscapes. Plants will not flower except in total frost-free areas. ANNUAL except in Zones: 8-10



'Prince' Pennisetum purpureum (USPP18,509)



from Proven Winners website

Another warm season ornamental grass is the semi dwarf 'Prince' Pennisetum which showcases purple foliage that intensifies in summer heat. At 5- 6 ft tall, it is the perfect highlight in the back of a border or large container. **ANNUAL** except in zones 8 - 11

Pennisetum purpureum Princess (PP 17,728)



The warm season Fountain Grass 'Princess' does not bloom but its deep purple foliage is stunning in combination with summer-blooming perennials. It is 2' - 3' tall. Plant it in a mixed border with Asters and hardy Mums to finish the season with a flourish. A Proven Winners® variety. **ANNUAL** except in in Zones 8-11

Pennisetum orientale Karley Rose



Oriental fountain grass is a hardy, small bunch grass with a beautiful inflorescence that is unusually long lasting. Pennisetum 'Karley Rose' is 24" to 36" tall and provides 5 months of color, texture, motion in a sunny site. The heavy rose-pink blooms literally glow when lit from behind by early morning or late afternoon sun.



The pink flowers make perfect companion to Coneflowers, Knock Out Roses and Sedums. This fountain grass is not invasive and self-seeds only sparingly in the garden. Zones 5 - 9. Prune back in early spring.

You might like:



Paid Distribution

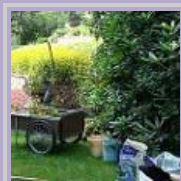
Rich Chocolate Frosting
[MarthaStewart.com](#)



The Glory of Fall Colors - BRAVO!
[this site](#)



Candlelight in OctoberCool Outdoor Lights
[this site](#)



Serenity in the Garden: Hellebores - The Enduring Mid-Winter Flower
[this site](#)

[?]

Posted by Jan Johnsen 0 comments [Links to this post](#)



Labels: [horticulture tips](#), [plants](#), [serenity gardens](#)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2010

Speaking with Earth Spirits in a November Garden



Hydrangea in front of Doublefile Viburnum - early November in NY state

"While my gardens, admittedly neglected this summer, have morphed mainly to daisy-yellows and a plethora of pink malvas, the flowers from my friend Sharon's garden in Watertown, Massachusetts still flourish.

But you should know that Sharon speaks with earth spirits and they obviously help.

~ Sophia Serve



Crabapple in my garden in November

Don't you love that? "...and they obviously help..."...of course they do! Here is my November ode to Earth Spirits:






Hellebore from Pine Knot Farm in my garden

'Speaking with Earth Spirits'

*Deep down, in the warmth of the fecund earth,
the spirits sing songs of life.
Hoping we hear, they inhale and exhale along with the seasons.
Now, in the cool days of November, they sing to us of rest,
replenishment and they ask us to be calm.
The time has come to listen
and of course, to rake the leaves...the leaves...*



Crabapple again.....love those rocks!

Posted by Jan Johnsen [1 comments](#)  [Links to this post](#)     

Labels: [musings](#), [plants](#), [quotes](#)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2010

Hellebores - The Enduring Mid-Winter Flower



one of my landscapes - Jan Johnsen

What is evergreen, deer resistant, thrives in shade, has flowers and comes back every year?

You could answer Andromeda (Pieris) - but it doesn't really like shade. Perhaps you answered Hakonechloa (Japanese Forest Grass) but it doesn't have flowers.

Barberry (berberis) and Daffodils are not evergreen. Grasses, Boxwood and sedges don't meet this criteria either....



from Debs Garden

The problem free, shade loving Hellebore (Helleborus) is the answer. They are a perfect plant for a Serenity Garden....



The Perennial Plant Association's Plant of the Year for 2005, Hellebores bloom from winter to early spring across the United States, depending on USDA zone and variety. They like light to moderate shade, especially an area shaded by deciduous trees, with full sun when they flower, and protection from summer heat.

Hellebores sport drooping, buttercup-like flowers colors of pink, mauve, white, green, burgundy, yellow, black-purple, bi-colored, speckled and more. These flowers last into the summer, becoming greener or darker with maturity. They make a spectacular cut flower and you can float the blooms in a shallow bowl.



HGC Winters Song

Helleborus are native to Eastern Europe and Asian and have been used in gardens for centuries. In Elizabethan times, hellebores planted near your door were believed to keep your home free of evil spirits and witches (maybe this is because every part of the plant is poisonous).



HGC Cinnamon Snow

Interestingly, hellebore flowers don't have petals but have colorful, cold hardy sepals. Sepals attract early season pollinators (honey bees, wasps) and protect the plant's reproductive parts. Unlike petals, sepals actively photosynthesize, which is why they stay intact and darken through the season.

In recent years Hellebores **have been rediscovered**.... At a time when most other things in the garden are bare and uninspiring, hellebores add a touch of brightness to a winter garden.

Their dark green, leathery clumps of evergreen foliage grow larger as the years pass and they look great in winter. They are hardy from Zone 5 - 9. Mulch well in colder climates and protect from shelter from drying, winter winds. Adequate moisture, particularly in spring, is essential. One plant can be 12" to 18" tall, 18" to 24" wide and container plants can be planted at almost any time.

The two most commonly seen species are known as Christmas Rose (*H. niger*) and Lenten Rose (*H. orientalis*), due to the time of year they flower and their rose-like blooms. But many are simply called hybridus, due to interbreeding.



Sunshine Farm Hellebores

Barry Glick, aka Glicksterus maximus aka The Cyber-Plantsman has devoted more than six West Virginia acres to his 'Sunshine Selections' of hellebores. He cultivates some 68,000 hellebores ([click here](#)) on the hills of Sunshine Farm & Gardens in Renick. You can visit him in mid winter and see for yourself!



HGC Joseph Lemper

An improved form of *Helleborus niger* comes from the German breeding program of Joseph Heuger. His HGC or 'Helleborus Gold Collection' has strong stems, upright, outward facing flowers (not droopy!) and a long flowering period. H. 'HGC Josef Lemper' has large white flowers which starts blooming in late Fall and continues until March. These flowers provide an amazing, midwinter flowering display. Plus all HGC hellebores bloom in their first year and are tissue cultured so every plant is vigorous.



HGC Joseph Lemper

Helleborus niger 'HGC Jacob' is Burgundy-stemmed with pure white flowers with a pink blush in cooler weather. The flowers are slightly fragrant, numerous and long-lasting. The foliage is deep green, toothed and held on dark stems. Blooms extremely early from November through January - a **true Christmas rose**. Can be brought inside to enjoy as a holiday decoration and then planted outside in the spring.



HGC Pink Frost

***Helleborus x ballardiae* 'HGC Pink Frost'** features burgundy and white buds which open to soft pink shades. Flowers mature to deep burgundy. As fresh blooms appear a multicolored effect is created with a legion of burgundy buds unfurling in antique-toned pinks. Serrated, rich green foliage with red stems are the best.

Blooms January–March. Size: 9"–15" high x 18" wide; hardy to zone 5.



Pine Knot Farms

[Pine Knot Farms](#) in Virginia is a premier Hellebore nursery.. Every Winter they have a **Hellebore Festival**. If you live nearby please check it out! with speakers, tours, etc.

Here is a great book on Hellebores:



[Hellebores](#)
C. Colston Burrell...
[Best Price \\$14.99](#)
or Buy New [\\$26.56](#)
[Buy from amazon.com](#)
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Posted by Jan Johnsen [4 comments](#)  [Links to this post](#)    

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2010

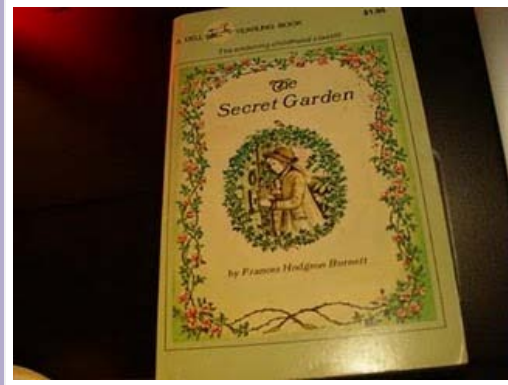
What makes a garden special....more musings



I am interested in what opens the inner eye that children have, that makes you aware of what matters.
Gardens are good at that.

~ Mary Keen

Gardens and children go together. Like the little girl in the garden in the children's classic, '**The Secret Garden**' by Frances Hodgson Burnett, we are exposed to a world of wonder if we only stop and peer into its mysteries...



this is a book for all ages - a great read!

Of course, the garden described in Hodgson's book was an English walled landscape but it could have been any kind of outdoor space devoted to bridging the gap between the human and the green world.....



This is the purpose of a Serenity Garden...I don't care so much if it is a magnificent boxwood construct filled with flowers or if it is a little sunny spot carved out of a wooded hill...a serenity garden is a place where 'feeling ' is paramount, where the atmosphere tingles with Nature's radiance.



'Crystal Palace' Lobelia in a hanging basket upon a carved tree stump in one of my gardens - Jan

There is great website from England called **"Thinkin Gardens"** (click on it) that addresses this in a way ...in their manifesto (!) they write this:

"Gardens have lost their greater ambitions. They are no longer a stimulus for artistic debate nor are they an accepted medium for creative expression;

television has reduced gardening to entertainment.

We now judge gardens principally on the quality of their plants, planting and housekeeping which,

while they are vital raw materials in most gardens alongside design,

are only a contributory part of what gardens have to offer."



Amen to That!

But I guess 'feeling' and 'transcendence' are not easily transferable to the TV screen. Especially when people's attention span is diminished...what we miss when we stare at a LCD or whatever screen is the 'depth' of feeling.



photo by Michelle Derviss - Garden Porn - a great site

Gardens restore our 'depth'...they invigorate the 'now' from a pale, washed out beige to a bright, vibrant yellow...they give us permission to sing....

As Mary Keen noted, a garden "makes you aware of what matters."



Johnsen Landscapes & Pools: Coleus, Plectranthus, Ageratum in front, Blue Angelonia

Posted by Jan Johnsen 0 comments  [Links to this post](#) 

Labels: [books to read](#), [musings](#), [serenity gardens](#)

Next Friday - My One Day Class at NY Botanical Garden



Next Friday - November 12, 2010, I am giving my one day class at the NY Botanical Garden,

Designing Outdoor Spaces that Relax and Renew the Spirit



I will share how to look at the physical world from a unique perspective which will strengthen your ability to create serene and harmonious outdoor spaces. I received the 'Instructor of the Year' award from NYBG and I will do my best to live up to that honor.

I love to share what I have learned over the decades and I do so with enthusiasm, Powerpoint presentations and in class demonstrations are included...

I will show how to incorporate various cultural and ancient traditions into a garden. Specifically these include :



DISCOVER THE POWER POINT IN YOUR BACKYARD

HOW THE DIVINE PROPORTION CAN CREATE HARMONY IN YOUR GARDEN

WHY EAST WAS JEFFERSON'S FAVORITE DIRECTION

WHICH TREES BRING HAPPINESS (literally) TO A LANDSCAPE

HOW TO USE THE POWER OF COLOR TO ENHANCE A SERENE ATMOSPHERE

so please join me - it will be fun and informative and you will certainly meet other like minded, kindred spirits there as well.



NYBG garden

(There is a snack bar there so you don't have to bring lunch).



NYBG Conservatory - a must see.

Posted by Jan Johnsen

0 comments



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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2010

FLOWER VASES - not your mom's vase...



courtesy - martha stewart living

Flower vases may be the most overlooked decor item for the home but still every designer has tried his or hand at vases....and you can see why - this lovely cottage kitchen above would not be the same without all those flowers in vases scattered about!

So now, as we venture indoors in the colder time of year, it may be a good time to

explore some possibilities for showing off Nature's bounty:

First possibility : **The Watering Can**

any old one will do - go to antique stores and stock up on watering cans - a great gift as a vase....



courtesy [Slack 12](#)

An unusual idea : the faux **Grass Vase**.



by Claydies for Normann Copenhagen ([click here](#))



The Normann Copenhagen website writes:

"Grass is a reminder of the strong contrasts that exist between the civilised and the uncivilised, as expressed in the contrast between the

asphalted road and an untouched roadside."

Claydies, the creators of this stoneware vase, explains:



"During the development phase of the vase Grass, we carefully hand modeled all of the details. A small and humble flower can become important in Grass. The flowers grow in grass, so for us it was natural to surround the flower with grass. But Grass can also stand alone and just be."

This vase was so popular that they ran out of the medium size... so they decided to have a class make their own grass vase! [Look here for photos by clicking.](#)

Third : **Japanese Sensibility**



from [Uncommon Goods](#)

This gorgeously polished agate vase was created for the Japanese art of flower arranging, Ikebana, with its emphasis on simplicity and balance. A slice of Brazilian agate, it has a small water reservoir within that keeps blossoms and stems fresh. Harmony with nature. Handcrafted in Oregon.

Fourth : **Take a Can, Cover with Cork....**



You must check out the directions for making this - Click [HERE](#) ... buy a sheet of cork and clean an empty can and there you go!

Fifth: **GOLDEN FRUIT VASE**

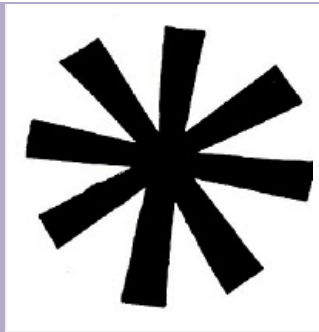


This is my favorite...from [Henry Road website](#)....Perfect for the holidays. Makes any flower look amazing. (But now it seems to be out of stock - I cannot find it on their website a mere 8 hours later.....such is life...)

Posted by Jan Johnsen 3 comments  [Links to this post](#) 
Labels: [flowers](#), [great gifts](#)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2010

[The ASTERISK - This Garden Writer's View](#)

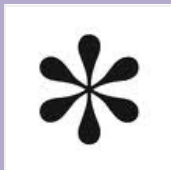


As is apparent, I enjoy writing about gardens, plants, landscapes, design, color and 'big picture' ideas.

I also like to explore the intersection of the art of writing and the art of gardening...

this particular interface is not well known - but you can see it clearly in the little punctuation mark called,

THE ASTERISK



The term asterisk comes from Latin 'asteriscum' which means "little star". It is a typographical symbol that resembles an image of a star...

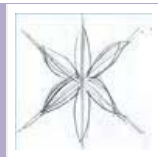
but I beg to differ, I think it resembles a **FLOWER!**

and so I would like to think that all those footnoted sentences have little flowers behind them...and why not draw little flowers within our sentences? better than smiley faces, yes?

So here is my paeon to the lowly *Asterisk*...may you always see a flower when you see one.







anemone blanda by Jan Johnsen

Anemone blanda

These spring-blooming bulbs have daisy-like flowers in blue, purple, pink, or white. The foliage is fern-like. The plant grows three to nine inches tall and has a spread of three to six inches. Plant some bulbs (really corms) now for spring!

You might like:



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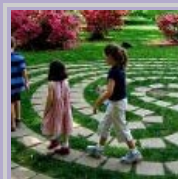
Macaroni and Cheese with Butternut Squash
[MarthaStewart.com](#)



Matt's Description of a Healing, Serenity Garden
[this site](#)



An October Flower Border - Fall Garden Inspiration
[this site](#)



Serenity in the Garden: What makes a garden special....more musings
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