



Greely Gardeners Group

Newsletter

August 2004

GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

Wednesday, September 8, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre

Monthly meeting and Annual General Meeting. The annual meeting will be a brief business meeting and will be followed by a guest speaker presentation as usual. Topic: "Selecting Trees and Shrubs." Guest speaker: Peter from Richmond Nurseries

Wednesday, October 6, 7:15 p.m. Greely Community Centre

Monthly meeting. Topic: "Rock Gardens". Speaker: Ernie Boyd from the Ottawa Valley Rock Garden Society.

Wednesday, Nov. 3, Greely Community Centre, 7:15 p.m.

Hardscaping – Arbours, pergolas and other garden structures. Speaker: Maryanne Schmitz, from Artistic Landscaping.

Wednesday, December 1, Greely Community Centre, 7:15 p.m.

Christmas Pot-luck Supper. Members and guests. Details to be announced. Would you be willing to help organize this event? If so, give Gill a call at 821-6123

GREELY GARDENERS TOUR GARDENS NORTH

More than two dozen members and friends took the short trip to North Gower August 15 for a guided tour of Gardens North. This unique, eight-acre garden specializes in the production and sale of hardy native and exotic seeds and plants. They supply seed to individual gardeners, commercial growers, botanic gardens as well as other seedhouses.

Because there were so many of us, we split into two groups for the tour, which covered every kind of terrain from moist shade gardens to rock gardens and everything in between. And we ended with a visit to the sales centre, where most of us took advantage of plants at half price!



Gardens North is open to the public only a few times each summer. If you weren't able to join us and you'd like to know more about Gardens North, you can visit their website at <http://gardensnorth.com>

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

If you know of upcoming events that you think would interest GGG members, call Bob at 821-1847 or send an email to stanleyb@rogers.com.

TIP OF THE MONTH



ORNAMENTAL GRASSES ARE SPECTACULAR in the garden during any season of the year, but they show their full glory in the fall. Many of the new ornamental grasses are not the invasive, spreading “thugs of the garden” anymore. There are plenty that are graceful, clump forming and attractive the entire year round. And they require little maintenance – pruning them to the ground with hedge shears in early spring is all that is required each year.

One of the best types of ornamental grasses to create a dramatic, group or accent display is *Miscanthus sinensis*, or Japanese silver or maiden grass. *Miscanthus* cultivars are not invasive and can easily be divided if the clump gets too large. An excellent *Miscanthus* for a specimen planting is called *Gracillimus*. The plant has an attractive vase shape with narrow green leaves that gracefully cascade from the upright stems. In the garden three clumps could be used effectively as a focal point against a fence. In the fall, upright, reddish-tan flowers appear. The slightest breeze moves the blooms causing them to come to life. These flowers will soon turn into beige seed heads that can be left standing through the winter. The fountain effect of the tan leaves and seed heads against the snow is very picturesque.

Many newer cultivars have made their ways to garden centres lately. Some are not as hardy as *Gracillimus*, others are shorter or taller, have different blooms or foliage and still others may have better fall colour. *Gracillimus* is still one of the favourites. Others that are worth investigating are *Silberfeder* (silver feather grass, hardy to zone 4), *Grosse Fontane* (large, silver fountain grass to two metres tall), Undine (a compact form for smaller gardens), Morning Light (has a narrow band of white down the leaves, producing a shimmering effect), *Malepartus* (red flowered fountain grass with better hardiness), *Sarabande* (fine textured, silver foliage on a compact plant), *Variiegatus* (variegated, green and white striped leaves) and *Zebrinus* (zebra grass with bright green leaves having golden horizontal banding).

The feather reed grass is also a favourite. In particular, *Calamagrostis acutiflora* Karl Foerster is an excellent accent plant. Karl Foerster is a cool season grass, so much of its growth is in the spring. The early start allows the flowers to appear early in the summer (unlike the late fall blooming time of some *Miscanthus*). The flowers begin with a white colour then fade to rose and finally transform to narrow golden-tan seed heads. Use several plants to make a bigger impact using it as a strong vertical statement. Position this plant so that the late day sun can shine through the plant and make the seed heads glow. Karl Foerster is reliably hardy to zone 4.

Overdam variegated reed grass is a relative of Karl Foerster. It has boldly striped green and white leaves which contrast well with the gold flowers and seed heads that follow in mid-summer. *Stipa* is an unusual warm season grass that has had plenty of fame this past summer. That readily withstands drought. Masses of this grass tumbling down a hillside have the effect of rolling waves. *Stipa* needs excellent drainage during the winter to survive from year to year.

Another popular ornamental grass is *Panicum virgatum* (red switch grass). This native tall-grass prairie plant has been bred to produce several excellent cultivars for the garden. One of the newest is called Heavy Metal. This has bright blue foliage through the summer with highlights of yellow and red in the fall. This is a warm-season grass that is very drought tolerant and shows excellent hardiness to zone 3.

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee

President ~ Bob Stanley 821-1847

Events Director ~ Gill Toll 821-6123

Secretary/Treasurer ~ Heather Clemenson/Gary Hall 821-7445

Membership ~ Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816