

Horticultural News and Research Important to American Gardeners

FLOWERS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL APPEAL

Next time you're thinking of buying a bouquet for a special someone or maybe yourself, you might want to tune in to a growing trend and buy organic. Because



of increased awareness of pesticide use in the cut flower industry, the demand for posies without poisons has escalated markedly in the last few years.

A recent article in *USA Today* notes that the sale of organic flowers doubled from 2002 to 2003. The article also stated that organic flowers will likely experience a 13 percent revenue increase through 2008, making them a noteworthy market contender.

Gerald Prolman, the founder and CEO of Organic Bouquet Inc., which bills itself as the world's first online organic florist, believes that "organic production means new growth for the floral industry, especially as consumer awareness of social and environmental issues relating to floral production continues to rise."

However, there are less than 100 organic flower growers in the world, according to *USA Today*. With fewer

resources and smaller facilities, these growers aren't yet able to produce many of the well-known cut flower favorites such as roses, orchids, and carnations. This could well change, along with the total number of organic flower growers, if the current demand for organic flowers continues.

NATIVE CALIFORNIA PLANT REDISCOVERED

Since no one had seen Mount Diablo buckwheat (*Eriogonum truncatum*) in almost 70 years, the plant was presumed extinct, though local botanists never gave up hope of finding it again. An annual

wildflower endemic to Mount Diablo in the East Bay area of California, the elusive buckwheat species was rediscovered this past spring by Michael Park, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, as he conducted a plant survey in the area.

"Because it's so celebrated in the botanical community, it had grown in my imagination," says Park of the buckwheat. "It's a surprisingly dainty plant once you see it in the field." The plants grow between three and eight inches in height, bearing small, pinkish flowers that resemble baby's breath (*Gypsophila*).

Several factors may explain the reappearance of the native buckwheat. One is that Save Mount Diablo, a local conservationist organization, had recently placed the land where the plant was found under preservation. Interestingly, rabbits may have had an important role to play as well. "It seems as though rabbit browsing



Top: Michael Park, a graduate student at the University of California-Berkeley, poses in front of the tiny flowers (shown closeup, above) of the rare Mount Diablo buckwheat.

may be a main positive factor," explains Barbara Ertter, curator of Western North American Flora at UC Berkeley's Jepson Herbarium. "The plant probably can't compete well against the flood of Eurasian annual grasses that dominate California's landscape and the rabbits thin those plants."

Efforts are underway to propagate the buckwheat at the UC Botanical Garden, which is part of the Center for Plant Conservation network. Botanists hope to produce a reserve of seeds in case the species declines further, and will continue to monitor the population in the wild.

BUY LOW, PLANT HIGH

If you're planning to do some planting this fall, you may do well to heed the advice of horticulture researchers at Cornell University, particularly if you've purchased bare-root perennials. During a two-year study, they discovered that planting depth can have a dramatic impact on the performance and even survival of bare-root perennials.

The standard advice when planting perennials already growing in containers is to place them at the same level they were planted in the container. While this still holds true, with bare-root perennials, it can be impossible to tell where that point was. "Our advice would be to plant so that any young developing buds would be fully exposed to light, and the crown is at or slightly above the soil line," says William B. Miller of the Horticulture Department at Cornell. For a pictorial guide to planting bare-root perennials on the high side, log on to www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/Planting_Perennials_High.pdf.

For those unfamiliar with the term, "bare-root" indicates that the plant

comes without soil and usually in a dormant or semi-dormant state. Many gardeners know that buying bare-root plants from mail order nurseries can be a more economical option as the lack of heavy soil keeps shipping costs down. Some perennials commonly sold bare-root include peonies, daylilies, irises, and hostas.

NEW RESOURCE FOR GARDENERS

Garden Literature Index™ by EBSCO Publishing may be coming to a library near you. Designed for gardening enthusiasts, students, and professionals, this new database allows users to research articles pertaining to plants and gardens from more than 300 core titles, going back more than a decade. This includes *The American Gardener* from the May/June 1996 issue to present, with selected articles to 1992.

The tool lists serial titles as well as specialty publications. With a special focus on environmentally sustainable horticulture and design practices, topics in the database include botany, ecology, plant conservation, garden history, and land-

GARDEN TRENDS

A recent poll of over 1,000 households throughout the continental United States found that three-quarters of them have some form of lawn or garden. Of these households,

- 39% planned to water with movable sprinklers or soaker hoses.
- 26% expected to rely on rainfall only.
- 38% had no plans for conserving water.
- 24% practice backyard composting.
- 91% noted having insect problems.
- 32% planned to use a combination of organic and chemical products to deal with pests.
- 32% planned to do nothing about pest problems.

(From the 2005 Summer Gardening Trends Research Report issued by the Garden Writers Association Foundation.)

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HORTICULTURAL HISTORY: A LOOK BACK

Liberty Hyde Bailey, an icon of American horticulture, lived through one of the most turbulent and devastating periods in United States and world history. Born in 1858, he lived through the Civil War, two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the atomic bomb.



Liberty Hyde Bailey as portrayed on the AHS award medal named in his honor.

Through all this, nothing could shake his love of plants and their ability to provide a sense of renewal.

In the October 1955 issue of the *National Horticultural Magazine*, which later became *The American Gardener*, the editors republished an essay titled “The Joy of Growing Plants” that Bailey had written in 1946. It reflects Bailey’s faith in the natural world and in its

regeneration in the midst of turbulence and change. (The first two paragraphs are excerpted here. The full version of

Bailey’s essay may be read in the online version of the magazine at www.ahs.org.)

The shadows of life grow long. They stretch back over eventful and confusing years. Great wars have been fought, the difficult discussions of peace spread their alarms, old friends have died, new names have come on the stage of life, accustomed ideas have vanished, and new subjects engage the people. Yet my plants remain, full of vigor, bright in their colors, bringing memories and mementoes of other lands; and they are silent.

These plants are desired for their joy and the surprise of growing them. The wonder of it grows with the years—how an inert item called a seed can spring into life and from it come an aspiring organism true exactly to its own kind and relationship even though planted half way around the world from the place of its origin and in soils and climates wholly strange to it. This is a perpetual miracle, none the less amazing because we are now so inquisitive about it with microscope and retort.

Though much has changed—both in horticulture and in the world—since Bailey penned this essay, gardeners still look to plants to provide them with joy wherever they garden.

—William Clattenburg, *Editorial Intern*

scape design. For more information, visit www.epnet.com/public/gardenlit.asp.

BANDING TOGETHER FOR NATIVE PLANTS

Last May, Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) reaffirmed its commitment to preserving native plants by becoming an affiliate of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, the nation’s most prominent promoter of native plants and their habitats. This affiliation links the DBG at Chatfield, a 750-acre nature preserve along the Deer Creek waterway, to the Wildflower Center, named for the former First Lady, in a partnership based on a shared vision.

“Both Denver Botanic Gardens at Chatfield and The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center are dedicated to native plants and educating people about the environmental necessity, economic value, and natural beauty of native plants,” says John Scully, chief executive officer at DBG.

Considered one of the top botanic gardens in the United States, DBG has researched and cared for native plants for

more than half a century. The Chatfield location is one of three satellite gardens; its picturesque location and hands-on educational exhibits already make it a popular draw for children and their families, and the garden provides an impres-

sive living laboratory for scientists, too.

With the Lady Bird Wildflower Center’s help, DBG at Chatfield will continue to offer research and educational programs, while promoting native plants throughout the country.



Mountains provide a backdrop for an antique tractor ride for visitors to the Denver Botanic Gardens at Chatfield, which works to preserve native plants and their ecosystems.

PEOPLE and PLACES in the NEWS

Two Gardens, One Director

Naples Botanical Garden in Naples, Florida, and Cleveland Botanical Garden (CBG) in Cleveland, Ohio, have formed a new affiliation to share personnel and ideas. Under the affiliation, Brian Holley, a member of the AHS Board of Directors and the executive director of CBG, now serves as executive director of Naples Botanical Garden in addition to his CBG post. "I see the alliance with Naples as yet another iteration of CBG's role as an industry leader and role model," Holley says. "It is my hope that we can leverage the resources of both gardens to develop a great botanical garden in Naples and to continue to grow the great one that we have now in Cleveland."



"Each affiliate takes on its own personality," says Damon Waitt, who heads the Wildflower Center's affiliate program, with a current total of eight affiliates nationwide. "It's about banding together and pooling resources to spread the message of native plant conservation."

PLANT BANNING REACHES NEW LEVEL

Connecticut is one of only five states in the nation to have implemented a ban on invasive plants. Now, because of legislative stalling on the passage of the old plant-banning bill, the authority to ban invasives will move from the state to in-

dividual towns. Beginning October 1, towns will be able to add plants to the preexisting list of invasives.

Bob Heffernan, executive director of Connecticut Green Industries, hopes towns won't add any plants to the list. "No state has gone as far as Connecticut," he says. "And every state that has tackled invasive plant policy has kept it on the state level." Heffernan and colleagues have met with the Nature Conservancy and the National Audubon Society to draft a new statewide bill limiting town power.

Many scientists and researchers favor a statewide bill as well. Donna Ellis, extension educator and co-chair of the Invasive Plant Working Group, which is affiliated with the University of Connecticut and provides significant input on invasives, says, "I don't think anyone knows how complicated local bans would be to enforce. If people are told they can't buy plants in one town, they'll just go to the next town over."

Written by Assistant Editor Viveka Neveln and Editorial Intern William Clattenburg.



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