



# Backyard Views

The Backyard Gardeners

Summer, 2010

The Backyard Gardeners, Inc. was established in 2007 as a non-profit organization to provide free education to homeowners in the Hampton Roads area on gardening and horticultural practices, designs and techniques in order to encourage conservation of our natural resources, the enjoyment of gardens, garden-related activities and creative garden art.

## Calendar of Events

Garden Talks, 7-8:30 pm  
Chesapeake Library  
298 Cedar Road

**June 15**

“Lavender—Growing, Drying & Using”

Doris Flattum,  
Harbinger Lavender Farm

**July 20**

“Beekeeping for Homeowners”,  
Frank Walker,  
Beekeepers Society

**August 17**

“Organic Lawns and You”  
Tony Besecker, NauraLawns

**September 21**

“Spring Color with Bulbs”  
TBG

**October 19**

“Indoor Plants”  
Audrey Knall, TBG

**November 16**

Orchids in Tidewater  
Steve Urich,  
Kaplan Orchid Conservatory

**December 14**

“Decorating Naturally”  
TBG

## Summer is here...

*Contributed by Audrey Knall and Patty Bennett*

It's hot, humid and hazy and most of us want to be lazy, but the garden still needs attention in order to survive and thrive. One of the biggest problems in the summer is watering. Plants will wilt in the heat of the day, but rebound once it cools, so heat doesn't necessarily mean you need to water. Then, there is that needed vacation—what to do with the plants. Here are a couple of things you can do to keep both you and your garden happy this summer.

- ◆ It takes a minimum of 1" of water per week to maintain your lawn, and applying that 1" in a single session is preferable to applications of smaller amounts. The increased watering in one session allows the roots to penetrate deeper into the ground which results in a higher "root to shoot" ratio, allowing the grass a better chance of surviving the stresses of our hot, humid summers. Multiple short waterings result in shallow roots which are more susceptible to summer's heat. For those of you who use an irrigation system to water your lawn, set your system to water once a week for an extended period of time. I set my system for 45 minutes per station set to start around 3 am. (Yes, 3 am. The lawn will dry the next morning.) Then, before you go to bed on the day you've preset on your timer, manually start the system. This results in two rotations of each sprinkler (one manual and one automatic) giving the lawn a double dose of water in one session.
- ◆ To keep your potted plants happy while you are on vacation, water them well and place together in a kiddie pool in a shaded area of your yard. Add a couple of inches of water to the pool. Grouping the plants will increase the humidity surrounding them and help keep them moist for up to a week.

## Plant Profile: Heuchera

*by Anne Rouquie*



*Electric Lime*

I admit it... I am a plant collector (aka, addict). I have a small collection of hostas, a bit larger collection of daylilies, a too large collection of Japanese Maples in pots, and now an expanding collection of heucheras.

Heucheras, also known as coral bells or alumroot, are a group of tidy, evergreen, mounding perennials, normally 1-2 feet in height and width. They bloom typically in spring or late summer on slender stems that can reach 1-2 feet above the foliage. Blooms can be in shades of rose, red, green or white. In my yard they thrive in well-drained soil in bright

shade. They do not like direct sun, however, they will tolerate morning sun in our area. Thankfully, they aren't bothered by pests or diseases and can be divided every 3-4 years in the spring or fall.

But, the attraction for me is the interesting, heart-shaped, often ruffled foliage whose colors intensify as the leaves age. 'Citronelle', 'Electric Lime', and 'Lime Rickey' all have bright light green leaves and really lighten up a dark spot in the garden. The veining of 'Electric Lime' turns a light red as the leaves mature. The leaves of 'Silver Scrolls' are green with silver interior markings along the veining. 'Midnight Rose' is a dark red-green leaf with pink splotches. 'Marvelous Marbles' leaves are medium green with red along the veining.

In my garden, heucheras bring a different leaf texture and happily compliment my ferns and hostas. I encourage you to try this versatile perennial. I'm sure I'm not the only one out there with PA (plant addiction).



*Midnight Rose*

# Spotlight on Gardens



by Patti McCambridge, photos by Susan Bradshaw

Take time this summer to visit some of our areas finest gardens to experience the beauty and find inspiration for your own garden. Nestled along the Elizabeth River in Norfolk is one of the hidden treasures of our area.. The Hermitage Museum and Gardens has a world-known collection of art, hosts premier art exhibits, has a Visual Arts School and a Studio Artist Program, but is also well-known for its beautiful grounds which include over 12 acres of gardens. Surrounded on three sides by the Elizabeth River, the Hermitage offers a beautiful setting for formal gardens, forested areas and wetlands. The formal gardens include the Circular Gardens and The Grotto where you will find a variety of flowering perennials, roses, peonies, shrubs and trees surrounding sculptures, benches, stone terraces and cobblestone paths. From shady

areas filled with camellias and ferns to areas covered in daylilies, black-eyed susans and crepe myrtles to wetlands populated by a variety of native plants, the Hermitage offers a peaceful garden setting within the city.

Built as a summer home by William and Florence Sloane, wealthy New Yorkers, it soon became their permanent residence. Mrs. Sloane expanded the home and landscaped the property to its current 42 rooms and garden showplace.

The Sloanes were avid art collectors with varied artistic passions and were instrumental in establishing the Norfolk Museum of Arts & Sciences which later became the Chrysler Museum.

To give you a history of the Hermitage and acquaint you with the landscaping, a guided tour of the grounds, *Through the Garden Gate*, is led by Yolima Carr, [Curator of Gardens & Grounds](#). Contact the Hermitage at 757-423-2052 for more information on dates of tours, pricing, and reservations.



## Tool Kit

by Gary Bennett

One of the hardest things to do in summer is to keep your plants healthy while you are on vacation. Here are a couple of ideas from Gardener's Supply Company that will help with that task. For more information about the products, check <http://www.gardeners.com/>.

**Drought Resistant Container Mix** starts you off right. It contains peat, perlite, vermiculite and polymer crystals that help retain water and keep plants evenly moist. It is perfect for veggies or ornamentals and will help in those hot summer days.

**The Deck Container Watering System** is the perfect way to water all the plants in any specific area. It contains 50 ft. of ½ in. tubing, 50 ft. of ¼ in. feeder tubing for individual placement and 9 sprinkler heads. The adjustable flow heads can be set for up to 30 minutes for worry-free watering.



**Aqua Cones** direct both water and fertilizer to the plant's roots offering a more efficient feeding system, keeping the leaves dry and reducing disease. They can be used in pots or your garden and offer a short-term worry free watering system. Using a 1 or 2 liter soda bottle, they save time and reduce waste. They are really "green".

## Garden Hints

- ✿ Mark the plants you plan to move while they are in bloom. Slip the plastic clips that come on packages of hamburger and hot dog rolls on the stems. You can use different colors to designate color of bloom or type of plant. Keep a key of what each color represents in your garden journal.
- ✿ You can continue to have lettuce in the summer if you plant the leaf type in the shade of taller plants like tomatoes. If the lettuce begins to bolt, dig them up and replant. The shock will stall the allow new growth.
- ✿ Take plenty of photos of your beautiful gardens to share and enjoy. They will also help in planning your garden next year.

You may request to be added to the newsletter mailing list at

[www.thebackyardgardeners.org](http://www.thebackyardgardeners.org)

or by emailing [gardenguru@thebackyardgardeners.org](mailto:gardenguru@thebackyardgardeners.org).

