



Wilson's Nursery

The Orders Are Rolling In...

...And we are all ready to get you setup for your 2024 projects! Please get together your plant lists and send them over to us at orders@wilsonsnurseryinc.com and we will make sure you get the material you need.

We are excited to partner up with all of you for another great season in the green industry! We continue to invest in great people and a solid inventory to make sure you receive the service and quality you have become accustomed to.

Please feel free to email any questions over to us or give (me) Matt a call at 612-990-4073 to schedule a visit at the nursery! We would love to discuss with you what your needs are for this coming season. Whether your needs are a container tree or perennial contract grow, a big order coming up, a standing delivery date, or just a check-in on types of plant material, we are here for all of it.

We can't wait to see you soon!



Connie's Corner

Anticipation: Trials and Tribulations

by Connie Kratzke

How is it late February already? Our mild winter is messing with my head. Things seem to be progressing more rapidly than ever before! I am still waiting for the other “boot” to drop. No portion of my brain believes we’re in the clear. An ample dumping of sloppy white stuff in March or April is expected. What some may regard as pessimism is just my mechanism for self-protection. A couple of decades of paying close attention to late and early weather have hardened me. Cautiously prepared for anything, I still enjoy the warmth and sunshine. That said, I am not as far with my outdoor brainstorming as I would normally be. Instead, I have come up with a way to take my indoor gardening to the next level. Perhaps it’s the allure of being able to control every environmental element with my phone. Compelling hobby or gardener’s revenge? You be the judge. I’m just going to enjoy it. My pampered plants will, too!

Don’t get me wrong. I have a clear goal in mind. (That said, I just drifted away for a few minutes to check seedlings and water houseplants.) Late last fall we evicted our old tri-hull, exposing a large patch of dead lawn. I have been eyeballing the

area for some time, waiting for the boat to disappear. Neighbor chickens and ducks enjoyed napping beneath our vessel, scratching up remnants of grass and contributing to the Clampett-est charm. Our cats loved rolling in the exposed dirt, drawing further attention to awkwardness. Giving away a '73 Lund Shell Lake Nipigon with no motor or steering was surprisingly hard! Our classic Minnesotan sob story involves a boat purchased for \$125.00 that ended up costing closer to 2K, only to convince us that kayaking is more our speed.

ANYway, my planting canvas is finally blank by standard definition. What you don't see are the real challenges. Lurking beneath the ground is a labyrinth of Maple tree roots, entangled in broken bricks and concrete base. Creating a depression will be difficult, but I want to make a rain garden. Topographically, it makes sense. Roof and hose run-off both flow that direction. In an attempt to incorporate shade and moisture-loving natives, it's my best bet. Perhaps this endeavor will also prevent mud from washing back onto our classy, cracked concrete patio.

I speak of our property as though it's the neighborhood eyesore and it surely isn't. All of us have little nooks of shame where we hide bad investments and unfinished projects. Hoards of useful stuff are fully capable of killing grass too. Landscapers organize tools and equipment for winter like church ladies arrange cake plates. No space is wasted. All of the things used to perform tasks gather in November; collecting leaves, nuts and snow until they are imposed upon again. When spring arrives they vanish as if they were never there, following the initial din of rough idles and cough-inducing, poofs of petro. Perhaps a few will cast lasting shadows that inspire future gardens.

As I contemplate the season ahead, I'm distracted by anticipated challenges. An earlier start heightens the risk we are forced to embrace. The trees decide when we dig them. From then on, we are at Mother Nature's mercy. Drought will likely be a factor again. Winds very well could too. The plants we use to accomplish aesthetic goals need to hold up. That expectation and resulting philosophy will influence the appearance of our landscapes. Plants that didn't excite before will earn honorable mention for their reliability. While we embrace the easy-going, we must move away from monocultures. Continuing to take risks is important. Expanding our pallets to include underutilized natives and native cultivars is a good strategy. Including tested, trusted introductions that tolerate extreme soils and climates is also a safe bet.

We're adding a few utilitarian groundcovers to our repertoire this year. Rosy Sedge (*Carex rosea*) is one of them. Who doesn't love a plant that's both shade and drought tolerant? If you're anything like me, you're thinking, "we'll see!" Cautious enthusiasm is perfectly acceptable. This little grass won't win you over with bling, but it may become your go-to lawn alternative for dry shade. Barren Strawberry (*Waldstenia ternata*) is another tough cookie we're bringing on. While non-native, it is a low-maintenance, drought-tolerant option for tough sites. 'Snow Flurry' Aster (*Aster ericoides*) will also be joining our team. Tolerant of clay, rock, lime and drought; there isn't much it can't hack. Gray-green foliage and countless white flowers reward those who invite a little flurry into their gardens.

Regarding larger specimens, 'Golden Sunset®' Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans* 'MNYG318153') will be available this summer. I became excited about the genus after camping in Lake Shetek State Park last fall. The property features a prairie planting

of Bluestems, Panicums and Sorghastrums that is spectacular in September. I'll include a photo. An ornamentally superior Indian Grass cultivar could give 'Karl Foerster' a run for his money. 'Prairie Moon' Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) is another captivating addition. Commandingly dramatic with ghostly white flowers; it makes a stellar accent. If you attended Garden Media Group's talk on current garden trends at Northern Green, "Horti-futurism" and "Delight in the Dark" both come to mind. Deer and rabbits avoid Eryngiums due to their spiny foliage, adding another element of functionality. Use 'Prairie Moon' to attract native bees, small moths and Black Swallowtails. 'Lady in Black' Aster (*Aster lateriflorum*) will be coming onboard. She's making a late entrance mid-summer, due to high demand. A Gypsy of sorts, 'Lady in Black' has a big personality that attracts roving bands of pollinators. She utilizes all of her assets to put on a technicolor display. 'Twilite PrairieBlues™' Baptisia (*Baptisia x variicolor*) is a big, bold player and a favorite of mine. We haven't had luck producing 'Purple Smoke' Baptisia and 'Burgundy Blast' has eluded us. The ornamental characteristics and landscape performance of 'Twilite PrairieBlues™' are tried and true. Leguminous flowers are a subtle, yet unusual combo of blackberry purple and butter yellow. 'Summer's Surrender' Ironweed (*Vernonia x PP28475*) is another formidable presence you'll encounter at Wilson's this summer. People seem most interested in compact cultivars like 'Iron Butterfly', but sourcing enough to meet demand has proven difficult. That's why we're test driving this big sucker. Much like the aforementioned plants, 'Summer's Surrender' has a substantial footprint. However, due to good manners and tidy appearance, it's a welcome addition to mixed borders and beds. This hybrid is tolerant of dry conditions and will maintain clean foliage despite them. Use it as an Aster alternative for late-season impact.

For options in the medium size range, we're bringing in Spotted Bee Balm (*Monarda punctata*.) I don't have that species at home yet, so I'm excited. Jagged textures contrast pleasingly with subtle hues to contribute something truly unique. Accepting of hot, dry locations with mineral soils; it makes great filler for stripped, exposed sites. Good bugs far and wide frequent gardens with Spotted Bee Balm. We're adding a few other mid-sized perennials but this is the one I feel confident promoting as "rugged."

Meeting new challenges head on is a requirement of our field. I suspect that's why the vast majority of us don't pursue other avenues mid-journey. Horticulture is never boring. No matter what we think we know, we only know a fraction of what there is to know. When we embrace the chaos and learn from it, we grow!



Above left: Native *Sorghastrum nutans* at Lake Shetek State Park. 'Golden Sunset' has olive-green foliage and a denser, more erect habit that holds up all winter. Above right: My 'Twilite PrairieBlues™' *Baptisia* last summer.

Do you enjoy Connie's articles? Come see her speak!

Our very own fulfillment manager and author of the famous 'Connie's Corner' will be giving an interactive talk about growing trees next month! Please mark your calendars for:

March 9, 2024 at 10:00 AM at Tonkadale Greenhouse!

You can RSVP for this event here:

<https://tonkadaleevents.eventcalendarapp.com/u/50268/278153>

Here is a short description as to what her talk will be covering (written by Connie):

Let's explore all of the reasons why we choose to incorporate trees into our lives! We can share our aesthetic, environmental and functional goals. Then we'll delve into tree selection; specifically how to select trees that work for you. Due to recent interest in fruit trees, I'll give you a realistic assessment of managing a home micro orchard. After that we will talk about how to make trees comfortable in their new homes. I will give you some concise, planting and maintenance basics that will be easy to retain and implement. New pests, diseases and environmental challenges seem to pop up every day. We will discuss how to mitigate those impacts and raise the next generation of healthy trees!

Strategic Systems / Sales

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