



Bear Creek Press

'Digging out of Winter'

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The Overachievers

Each year we try dozens of new annuals in our garden, in mixed planters, in the vegetable garden and at the Bear. The goal is simple- to make sure the plants we sell are good enough for your garden. If we paid big bucks for an agency to come up with an expensive ad campaign, the tag line would run like this: "If it's not good enough for our garden, it's not good enough for your garden". I sure am glad we didn't pay someone for a lame line like that.

Most of the selections really do quite well. They have, after all, been extensively trialed before being released to nurseries and are trained to bloom. A few, however, are in a category all by themselves, known simply as The Overachievers. Here are a few of our favorites.

One method of taming the heat of summer is to forget gardening and park on a couch in front of the air conditioner. For those who are adverse of such extreme measures, growing agastache (ag-a-stack-ee) is another heat-taming method. These cool plants are sun loving, heat and drought tolerant, deer resistant and don't know when to stop blooming. Heather Queen Agastache is one of our favorites. Soft, fragrant leaves are maroon underneath and frame multiple spikes of rose flowers.

Torenia Summer Waves come with a license to bloom and must be registered yearly with the plant police. OK, not really, but they should. We tried the blue, naturally, and planted them in the ground and in pots, just to be sure. We are now sure. These spreading annuals are flower machines, continuously flowering through the mild fall until November. They are happy in the shade and are perfect companions to almost any upright annual.

Rudbeckias are now available in as many colors as a paint chart. We chose the variety Cherokee Sunset for our trials and will offer several other flavors this spring. Fluffy multi-hued flowers appeared as low clouds through the summer, creating a welcome orange fog in a mixed flower bed.

Don't worry, we have not abandoned the old favorites (our roots, so to speak), the colors, textures, petals and leaves that are the backbone of the plant kingdom. There are just so many catgone new choices this year, we had to try more than a few. Check out photos of these and other overachieving annuals on the Bear's website, www.bearcreeknursery.net.

What's New at the Bear

So much to say and so little space. Not enough room to tell it all. No space for extra words.

☞ **Vegetable and Flower Seeds** Floor display of seeds- many flower, herb and vegetable varieties. Eliminate the middleman and grow 'em yourself. Great choices of inexpensive packets. Come see.

☞ **New Pottery** New selection of pottery from new sources. Different styles compliment existing glazed works. Bird baths, pedestal planters, pots and more. New styles, new colors. Sturdy wooden trellises, too. Come see.

☞ **Hypertufa Pots** Lightweight concrete planters in new sizes and many colors. Weather resistant and practically indestructible. Made in-house so are very cheap. Prices, that is. Come See.

☞ **More Greenhouse** More space means more plants, more annuals, more color, more choices. More greenhouse means more shelves with more space (see above). With garden goods, less isn't more- more is more. Come see more.

☞ **New Plants** Lots of new plants. New Annuals. New Perennials. New Herbs. New Ferns. So many they will have their own newsletter. Stay tuned. Out of room. Photos on website, www.bearcreeknursery.net. Oh, yeah, and come see.

Winter Gardening

By perfecting the art of garden procrastination, fall chores in the vegetable garden became winter chores in the vegetable garden. Winter gardening is actually rather pleasant, free of help from flying insects and much dryer of brow than a summer dig. One might say that 40 is the new 50 (degrees, that is) and then 30 is the new 40 and then one day you go out to play and try to push a shovel into the ground and nothing happens. Frozen ground means 20 has become the new 30.

You might call this "learning to dig snow" or "how to embrace your inner ice crystals". A little warming trend would be handy at this point.

I personally take offense to the premise put forth in the popular Square Foot Gardening manual in which the author claims that vegetable gardening should be an easy, work-and-worry-free activity. I simply refuse to garden unless it involves plenty of toil and trouble. This means healthy doses of rock wrestling, dirt digging, manure spreading, weed beating, grub finding, mind changing, soil turning, mud studded, sweat producing, ache inducing interaction with mounds of highly manipulated terra firma.

As a farmer-wanna-be, sand box deprived dirt nerd, I just wouldn't want it any other way. If I have to soil my reputation in the process, so be it. After forty years of playing in the dirt, I am ready for more.

Picking peas until dark is a luxury. Making a years' worth of pesto on the night before the first frost is a joy. Digging one hundred and fifty pounds of sweet potatoes just because I like the looks of the leaves and there is an extra row of nitrogen fed humus after the peas come out is a gift. Giving buckets of spoiled tomatoes to the chickens because it rained for three weeks straight during prime harvest season is ok too, especially according to the chickens.

After the straw thaws and the soil warms a little, we will just get out and do it all again.

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Old Ironsides

First, a tribute to an old friend. Blue Indigo, also known as false indigo (*Baptisia australis*), has finally received the recognition it deserves. A true native of the United States (*australis* means “southern” not “from Australia” as one might suppose), *Baptisia* can be a two-faced plant. It can be a drought resistant, gravel tolerating, deer sneering, diminutive roadside wildflower growing about two feet tall. Or, if given the slightest attention and some real soil, it will amuse and amaze by growing into a stunning four by four (feet, that is) specimen. Look closely and you will see a

legume; as a member of the pea family, erect clusters of flowers are held above trifoliate leaves and remind one of vetches, clovers and well, peas, as in the ones in the vegetable garden. A robust ten year old specimen is the most frequently asked about perennial in our front garden.

The colloquial name for indigo is rattle box, a description of the mature seeds rattling around in a dried pod and sometimes used in dried floral arrangements.

By being voted Perennial Plant of the Year 2010, *Baptisia* will happily be introduced to many new gardens including, perhaps, yours.

Look for young plants of blue indigo and a native yellow indigo grown from locally collected seed at the Bear this spring.

Our Shady Favorite

Dew dappled lance-shaped leaves greet you in the early morning. Silver leopard-dotted green leaves are covered with a deer deterring light fuzz. The fluff of foliage frame an early spring flower display. The morphing neon flower clusters open at raspberry and spin the color wheel to cobalt blue.

This mound of foliage known as *Pulmonaria*, commonly called lungwort, is one of the toughest perennials to populate the woodland garden. Contentedness with shade makes lungwort a perfect substitute for the deer-candy hosta and a good companion to hardy ferns and hellebores. All this, frost tolerance and clean foliage in the November garden make the *Pulmonaria* our shady favorite.

March Hours: Tuesday ~ Saturday, 9 to 5. Open 7 days a week in April.

New Vegetable Plants This Spring

Spinach Bright Lights Swiss Chard
Chinese Cabbage Broccoli
Cilantro Purple Tomatillo

Lots of Lettuce: Red Rosie Romaine
Red Lollo Green Romaine Red Summer Crisp
Green Butterhead Red Butterhead
Black Seeded Simpson
New Red Fire Red Oakleaf

Strawberries and Blueberries

March is Garden Club Month

Garden Clubs
Master Gardeners
Water Garden Societies
Botanical Societies

15% OFF

All plants for members of
ANY Garden Organization

Now through March 31, 2010



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