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Behnke's on
Radio and Television

A Calming Garden of Aromatic Pastels

— by Becky Heath,
of Brent and Becky's Bulbs

There have been many discoveries in studies about relieving stress that offer pleasant and fun possibilities for all of us. Of course, you already know that physical activity relieves stress. Gardening is one of the best stress relieving activities available, where activities might include stretching, pulling and deep-breathing fresh air. Added to that, there is new information about relieving stress using fragrance — they now call it 'aromatherapy'. Also, there is much information suggesting that being around pastel colors has a calming effect on one's emotions. Combine all three of these effects: get natural exercise gardening with fragrant, pastel flowers—and you have a sure fire way to help relieve some of the tension in your life.

Daffodils, which are rodent and deer proof, offer many possibilities for pastel colors. Narcissus 'Mon Cherie' is a white petaled, pastel pink, frilly-cupped daffodil that is a great garden plant. Narcissus 'Pink Charm' is just that — a charming pink and white beauty sure to win your heart. Narcissus 'Dottie's Dream' has the unusual coloration of soft yellow and soft pink — amazingly beautiful, believe it or not. All three of these daffodils offer the calming effect of the pastel colors and an assurance of success in the full sun garden. When you add Narcissus 'Pink Angel' and Narcissus 'Blushing Lady', you not only get their calm, pastel colors, they also offer the fragrance of



continued on the back cover



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Shade Tolerant Ornamental Grasses

—by Larry Hurley, Perennial Specialist

Although we tend to think of ornamental grasses as sun plants, there are some that do quite well in the shade. Below are some of my favorite shade-tolerant grasses. For more than you ever wanted to know about grasses and sedges, see *The Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses*, by Rick Darke. It is beautifully illustrated and well written, by a man who really knows and loves plants. We stock grasses in our perennial department from about mid-April through the fall. Actual availability is determined by the whimsy of our growers and suppliers, but tends to be best in May and June. Below are some cultivars to watch for:

My favorite is *Hakonechloa*, Japanese Forest Grass. As the name implies, this is an Asian species, but it is very well behaved and well suited for mid-Atlantic gardens. It is a short grass, attaining perhaps 14 inches in height in my garden. It spreads slowly by underground stems (rhizomes) and will require several years to make a nice clump.

Hakonechloa macra, the species, has plain green leaves. They are narrow and arching, falling with a fountain effect. In its third year at my place, it has survived full shade and wet soil with no complaints. *H. macra* 'Aureola' is a gold and white striped version, which is nothing short of spectacular. At Casa Hurley, it gets no more than two hours of sun a day, and is very dramatic when contrasted against blue-leaved hostas. *H. macra* 'Albo-striata' has white and green striped leaves. This spring we offered a new tissue-cultured cultivar from Terra Nova Nurseries, 'All Gold', which is "all gold" and somewhat more upright than the others. I am currently "field trialing" it in my garden. I expect to have it available for sale again in spring of 2005. Any of these are great accent plants, wonderful when combined with hosta, and I find them particularly nice when associated with water features. Because they are slow growing, they tend to be rather expensive for the size of the plants, and irregularly available. When we have nice ones in stock, you'd best stock up!!

A native grass that is quite shade tolerant is Sea Oats, *Chasmanthium*. In nearly full shade, and in moderately good soil, I find that it reaches about waist high (on me, that's around 3 feet. A little higher if I suck in my tummy.) It bears little flat, hanging, flower clusters that look sort of like oats or wheat that have been run over by a steam roller. They wave in the breeze in an appealing manner, and are frequently used in dried floral arrangements. Nothing seems to bother it, and if there is any drawback, it is that it comes up readily from seed, and you may wish to remove the seedheads before they fully ripen.

Sedges are relatives, and are honorary grasses from the ornamental point of view. (Among other things, they have triangular stems rather than round stems, but they look like grass). Many tolerate shade and/or wet feet. *Carex* is the name, some are native, but many of the most attractive ones originate overseas.

A number of *Carex*, such as *C. buchananii* (Leatherleaf Sedge) have very narrow, bronze-colored leaf blades, often bringing the question "is that plant dead?" Having visited New Zealand several years ago before it was overrun with Hobbits, I was thrilled (nay, squealed with delight) when I saw gazillions of clumps of various species of bronze *Carex* growing wild in the countryside. The color will be best with a fair amount of direct sunlight, by the way, or they take on a sort of khaki-green appearance. They are particularly nice in containers, and are well set off when used in combination with reds and other hot colors. You may find them in our perennial department, as well as our annuals department, as the "Proven Winners" people have been promoting them for fall container plants.

Another *Carex*, *C. siderostica* 'Variegata', has been at my place in full shade for perhaps 5 years now. This has wider leaves, and a sort of low, slowly-creeping look. This one is green and white, but there are some newer ones such as green and gold 'Island Brocade' and all-gold 'Lemon Zest' for the collector.

Also look for *Carex* 'Silver Sceptre', with narrow leaves and a white edge, clump-forming to about 15 inches tall, and *Carex* 'Kaga Nishiki', green leaves with golden margins, getting about 10 inches tall. Our best selection tends to be in May, when we may have 20 or more species and cultivars of *Carex* from which to choose. We offer a number of native *Carex*, in addition to the ones mentioned above, so we should have a sedge for every taste. □



Meet: Marian Parsley



Marian will soon celebrate her 25th anniversary at Behnke Nurseries!

Marian was originally hired as a greenhouse transplanter. It was her job to transfer tiny seedling to larger pots. These humble beginnings provide an apt metaphor for Marian's career at Behnke's. Her job and responsibilities have grown considerably over the years.

Marian now works with all three Behnke retail locations to help coordinate the shipping of plants from the production greenhouse to the stores. In the fall, she maintains a greenhouse of poinsettias and prepares them for sale during the busy holiday season. Although she describes her job as "a constant challenge," Marian feels fortunate to have a job with enough flexibility to provide many different tasks during the years, which keeps her work interesting and rewarding.

Marian began her career shortly after marrying another Behnke long-timer, Bill Parsley. Says Marian, "I am married to a wonderful man who is always supportive, and we have two beautiful daughters, Kristin, 19, and Amanda, 15."

In her spare time Marian enjoys writing, reading, baking beautiful decorated cakes and making candy. A surprising true fact about Marian is that she is a local pinball wizard—she wins more free games than she can play! She also loves to spend time with her girls, especially in the great outdoors.

Sudden Oak Death Alert

The Maryland Department of Agriculture needs the public's help in locating plants, infected with a serious plant disease, that were shipped into Maryland in 2003 or 2004. *Phytophthora ramorum* is a fungus-like pathogen that causes sudden oak death, or ramorum blight, on trees and landscape plants. If introduced into Maryland, this pathogen could result in the death of up to 60% of our hardwood forests and severely damage many popular ornamental landscape plants.

"If introduced into Maryland, this pathogen could result in the death of up to 60% of our hardwood forests."

The disease can spread many ways including in the air, on water, or by people. *P. ramorum* first appeared in California in 1995 and has since been found in North America in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. This disease attacks over 60 host plant species, including Douglas fir, oak, rhododendron, mountain laurel, lilac, camellia and viburnum. Although the disease has killed thousands of oak trees in California, many other hosts are not killed but may serve to spread the pathogen. Symptoms include leaf spots, stem lesions, and tip dieback.

In 2003 and 2004, nursery stock infected with *P. ramorum* was shipped from California and Oregon to nurseries, garden centers, and consumers in many states. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has contacted all establishments and individuals in Maryland known to have received potentially infected plants. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these plants had already been sold to consumers. MDA is asking Maryland residents to participate in a homeowner survey to locate infected plants in Maryland landscapes. If you recently planted woody plants showing unusual symptoms in Maryland, please contact the University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center for information and instructions on how to submit a sample for testing: 1-800-342-2507, <http://www.hgic.umd.edu>

For more information on this disease, including a complete known host list and pictures of symptoms, please visit: <http://www.mda.state.md.us/plant/sod2004> □



The Burning Bush Question

—by Larry Hurley, Perennial Specialist

Ahhh.....autumn. It's almost time for the fall-color season. Soon the airwaves will be full of enticements to "come to Vermont" or "visit scenic Skyline Drive". Articles and radio spots will appear saying that "this year's fall color will not be as spectacular as usual" because it's—too warm; too wet; too dry; too cool. Television reporters will be staked out at the National Arboretum, waiting to report on the first leaf to drop. Garden centers will be working overtime trying to pry you away from watching football on television all weekend.

One of our enticements is the popular landscape shrub, *Euonymus alatus*, a.k.a. "Winged Euonymus" or "Burning Bush." (The latter is a Biblical and not a political reference, of course.) This is a staple item of the nursery industry, sold primarily for its flaming-red colored fall foliage display. Unfortunately, it does seed around and has become a weed problem in parklands. For instance, if you visit Maryland's Antietam

Battlefield, you will see them growing in the woods around Burnside's Bridge. Because it is an invasive plant, we would like to offer some alternative suggestions. These are all shrubs or small trees that offer red color in the fall and are unlikely to cause environmental problems. Meanwhile, our growers and buyers are researching some new varieties of burning bush which are reported to be non-invasive.

Itea virginica, or Virginia Sweetspire: a native plant that gets 3 to 5 feet in height, wider than it is tall. It develops a nice red fall color which it retains for a longer time than does the euonymus. It also has lightly fragrant white flowers in the spring. Michael Dirr, in the *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, says that when it is planted in mass, the effect is "staggeringly beautiful". Tolerates wet soils.

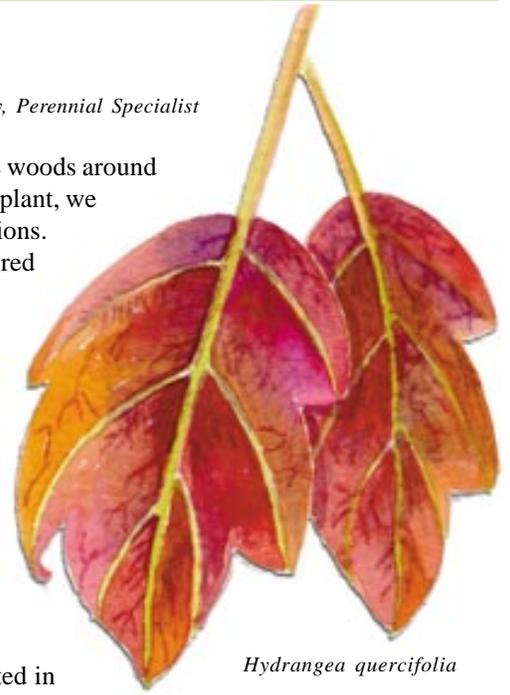
Hydrangea quercifolia, Oakleaf Hydrangea: growing to about 6 feet, this plant is grown mainly for the white flowers and the bold leaves. However, it does give a nice fall display, which ranges from orangey to red to purple depending on the cultivar. Give it morning sun and afternoon shade for the best performance.

Lagerstroemia indica, Crape Myrtle: again, grown mainly for the spectacular flowers, we should not forget that pink and red flowered cultivars of crape myrtle develop nice fall color varying from orange and yellow to red. Available in many cultivars, grows from 18 inches to 25 feet in height. Best selection on crape myrtles is in late spring and summer.

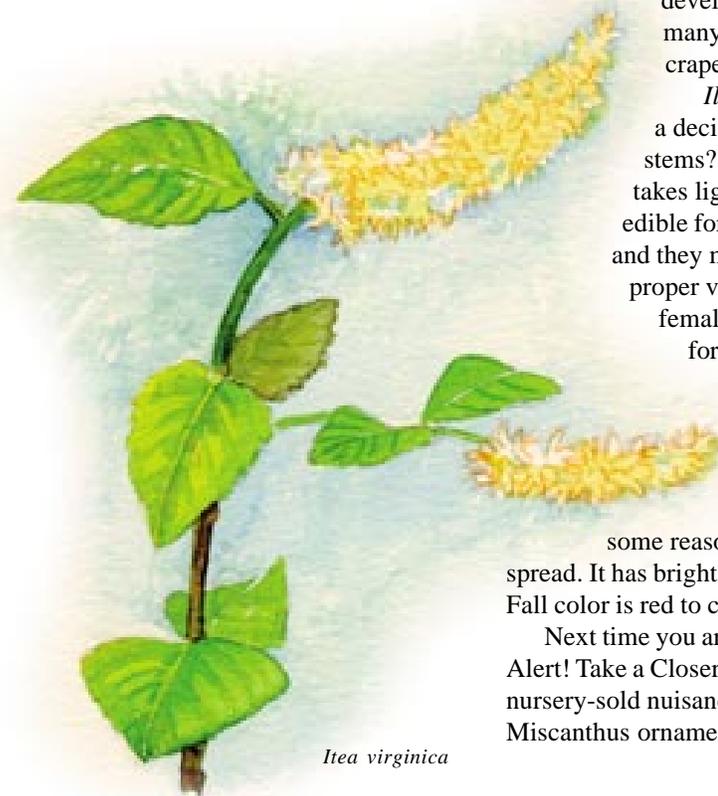
Ilex verticillata, Winterberry: for something a little different, how about a deciduous holly with lousy fall color but bright red berries that cover the stems? Another native to Maryland, and again in moist areas, this shrub takes light shade to full sun. The birds and squirrels love the berries (fruits not edible for people). You need a male plant to act as a pollinator for female plants, and they must all flower at the same time. Nursery staff can help you select the proper varieties. Note that one male can do the trick (so to speak) for many females, as the pollen is moved by bees: you don't need to plant one male for each female.

Aronia arbutifolia, Red Chokeberry: apparently the name has been changed recently. No, silly, not the Chokeberry name, which is what we in the marketing end of the plant world tend to think of as not having a lot of market appeal, but the scientific name: now listed as *Photinia pyrifolia*. This is another nice native species, which for some reason has not sold well for us. It gets 6 to 10 feet high, and about equal in spread. It has bright red fruits like rose hips in the fall, and nice white flowers in spring. Fall color is red to crimson to purple. The fruits are not tasty, hence the name.

Next time you are at one of our garden centers, ask for our brochure: "Environmental Alert! Take a Closer Look..." It lists additional alternatives for Burning Bush, and other nursery-sold nuisance plants including Japanese Barberry, English Ivy, Bradford Pear, and Miscanthus ornamental grass. □



Hydrangea quercifolia



Itea virginica



Pumpkin Lore

—by John Peter Thompson

Soon will come the “Great Pumpkin” and those of us who know in our hearts that this new legend of our times is true will be readying ourselves. Even now we have a hard time deciding what night we can light our pumpkins, our Jack o’ Lanterns. The more creative among us will attempt to convince unsuspecting parents that the right night for fright is the 30th of October, Halloween Eve. We know they will not figure out that Halloween itself is already an eve of something.

It does not matter; we are already designing the faces of our orange orbs which will glow throughout the night. One moment we draw scary faces, warding off spirits past who take over our bodies and souls, the next we sketch a smiling, friendly image, welcoming all those who wish to visit

Celts of old Europe celebrated the end of the year on October 31st, a day we now call Halloween, All Hallows’ Day. Somewhat more logical than our New Year’s Day festivities in January, the ancient Druids saw the completion of the cycle of life and the absence of growth in the “dead of winter” as a time to commemorate the success of the past year and to begin plans and preparations for the next year.

An old Irish tale tells of mean old, stingy Jack, who tricked the devil into climbing an apple tree. Once there, Jack surrounded the tree with crosses so that the devil could not get down until he promised not to take Jack’s soul at death. The Devil readily complied. When Jack finally died, he went to the gates of Heaven, but was denied entrance, because he was too mean, so he went down to Hell, only to find that the devil would keep his pledge, and not let Jack in. Now Jack was all alone compelled to wander in darkness for eternity. He asked the devil to give him something to light his way. So, the devil threw him an ember from the fires of Hell, which Jack put in a turnip, hence, Jack o’ Lantern.

In the 1800’s the Irish who came to America discovered that the native squash relative, the pumpkin, made a far better carving in which to place a light to ward off evil spirits and to keep mean old Jack away.



Fall Events at Behnke’s

- **Fall Fest at Behnke’s in Beltsville**
Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 1-3, 2004.
Shop at any Behnke Garden Center location in September to collect your Super Fall Coupons. Redeem them during our Fall Fest Weekend, up to \$25 off every \$50 of your purchase total! (Coupons may be redeemed at any Behnke location October 1-3.)



- **Behnke’s Holiday Shop Opens October 1!**
Shop from a wonderful collection of gifts and decorations — redeem your Super Fall Coupons, too!
- **Holiday Open House Weekend**
November 19-21.

Check our website for more information on these and other upcoming events:
www.behnkes.com



Exquisite, Flamboyant, Robust, Lucky and Deadly Houseplants

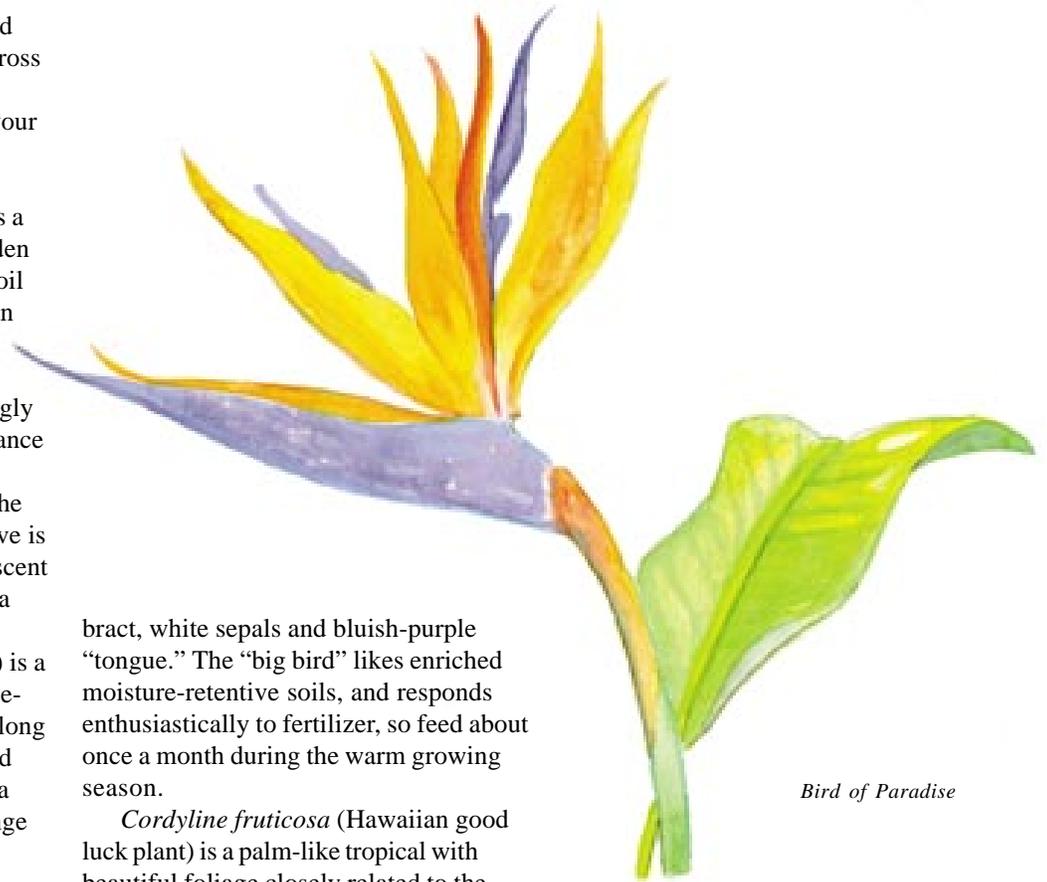
By Mike Bader, Manager, Houseplant Department

Over the years, with my trials and your questions, I have come across quite a few indoor plants that are often misunderstood. Here are five of your favorites and mine that can be found at Behnke's beginning in September.

Osmanthus fragrans (sweet olive) is a traditional element in the southern garden landscape, but with reasonably good soil and several hours of direct sun, you can enjoy their deliciously fragrant flowers indoors during the fall and winter. Individually the blossoms are surprisingly small and inconspicuous, but the fragrance is powerful and exquisite. As the plant matures, most of the foliage is held at the outermost ends of the stems. Sweet olive is rather slow growing, but a whiff of its scent carried on a cool autumn breeze makes a memorable impression.

Strelitzia reginae (bird-of-paradise) is a very attractive foliage plant, with paddle-shaped leathery leaves about 8 inches long and 6 inches wide. The uniquely shaped flower of this exotic tropical resembles a bird's head, and due to its brilliant orange and blue colors and unique form, it resembles not just any bird but a bird-of-paradise. Place in bright sun for the most flowers, preferably outside for the spring and summer. Move into shade for better looking foliage, but the flowers will be fewer in number. Bird-of-paradise is a real eye-catcher, in bloom or not, forming clumps 3 feet high. They are nutrient hogs, preferring acidic soil and fertilizers. Use a liquid fertilizer every two weeks during the spring and summer. Whether making star appearances in cut flower arrangements, or lending a romantic, tropical ambience to any room, you should find a place in your home so you can enjoy this flamboyant show-off.

Strelitzia nicolai (white bird-of-paradise) is a close cousin of *Strelitzia reginae*, but picture a crown of banana-like leaves, 4-6 feet long, arranged like fans atop a robust palm-like trunk, growing as high as your ceiling permits. The inflorescence (flower) is composed of a dark blue



Bird of Paradise

bract, white sepals and bluish-purple "tongue." The "big bird" likes enriched moisture-retentive soils, and responds enthusiastically to fertilizer, so feed about once a month during the warm growing season.

Cordyline fruticosa (Hawaiian good luck plant) is a palm-like tropical with beautiful foliage closely related to the dracaena. Many new cultivars hold dracaena-like leaves that may be glossy green, red, purple, pink, yellow, white, or various combinations. Most of us remember the small stem cuttings, called "logs", laying horizontally, where the "eyes" on the stem would grow shoots with leaves. To be lucky, you must provide very humid air to keep the leaf tips from drying out and turning brown. Mist frequently, use a humidifier, or position the pot on a bed of gravel and water. Fluoride in the water will cause the leaf tips to brown as well. Today, in addition to bringing good luck to its owner, of course, the cordylines of Hawaii are still being made into hula skirts.

The Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*) is one of Mother Nature's most amazing marvels. They can be kept alive in cultivation, but not in an open flower pot in the living room. These plants are native to bogs and wet seepage areas, and require

cool temperatures, a constantly moist substrate and a humid atmosphere, making a terrarium ideal. When an insect (flytrap chow) is attracted to the sweet nectar and enters the interior of the trap, it brushes against sensitive trigger hairs causing the two halves to close rapidly, trapping the unwary creature in a barred jail behind interlocking bristles. The trap closes tighter and the interior secretes deadly digestive enzymes. Feed flies or other little insects every few days during the growing season. Each trap can catch and digest a prey item just 2-4 times during its life time (only once if it's a really big bug). The traps have a limited number of false alarms too, so don't stimulate them too often. After about 10 false closures they will no longer respond. However, new traps are produced all summer waiting for their next dinner guest. □



A Coupon for New Subscribers!

Refer a Friend to GardeNews and You'll Both Receive a \$5.00 Coupon!

Behnke's free gardening newsletter is a wonderful resource that is appreciated by thousands of readers in the Washington D.C. area. Each issue features articles written by professionals about every aspect of gardening. Refer your gardening friends* to us. As new subscribers, we'll not only add them to our list, but will also mail them a coupon good for \$5.00 off their next purchase at any Behnke Nurseries Garden Center. You will also receive a \$5.00 coupon as a thank you gift. Submit your referral in one of the two ways described below.

Mail the names and addresses of your friends, and your name and address, to:

GardeNews Referrals
Behnke Nurseries
PO Box 290
Beltsville, MD 20705

or

Email the names and addresses of your friends, and your name and address, to:

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Please type "GardeNews Referrals" in the subject field.

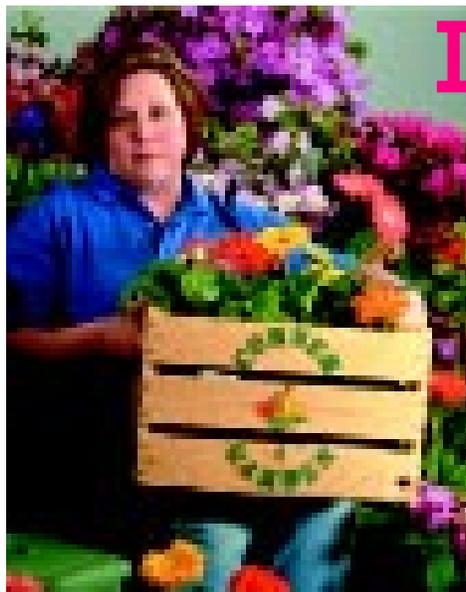
**Offer limited to 5 referrals per person, local addresses only please.*

Behnke's on Radio and Television

— by Annie Williams, Media Manager



John Peter Thompson, left, and Jos Roozen are hosts of Garden Sense, at noon on Saturdays on WMAL 630AM.



Susan O'Hara is the host of *The Corner Garden* on Fox5 morning news every other Thursday in the 8am hour.

During the past four months, Behnke's has engaged in a wonderful media campaign which includes a television segment on FOX5 Morning News and a weekly RADIO program on WMAL. Both programs were launched this spring and we have been delighted with the audience response.

In this new age of technology, Behnke's is reaching out to a broader audience of young gardeners, and at the same time trying to develop useful links and provide good information to devoted customers.

Now, we need your feedback. Please contact us at: BEHNKETV@behnkes.net and BEHNKERADIO@behnkes.net for show ideas and other useful gardening information.

Check our website at www.behnkes.com under "radio" and "TV" to find an archive of shows and listings for future times of broadcasts. Stay tuned!



Bulbs, from page 1

the old-fashioned jonquils that our grandmothers grew. When you pick a few of these luscious flowers and take them in the house, their natural fragrance is much more effective than the chemically enhanced store-bought fragrances used today. And the satisfaction that you did it yourself really boosts the spirit — an energy enhancer!

Planting blue Muscari (grape hyacinths) around the ankles of the soft colored daffodils will help their soft colors be visible from much longer distances than they would be otherwise. It's the perfect addition or "oriental carpet" that adds the finishing touch to the spring garden.

But, this is only the beginning. Adding *Hyacinthoides* (Spanish Blue-Bells) in pinks, whites and blues to this already beautiful array of flowers, extends the blooming season well into late spring, giving you many more weeks of pastel flowering beauty.

Other plants like sweet alyssum, thyme, asiatic lilies, various mints, roses and tuberose make great additions to the pastel, fragrance garden. All can be combined in the same garden and even planted in layers as long as the plants have similar requirements for sun/shade or moisture levels and if the soil is very rich and well drained. The many different types of bulbs and plants that have nice fragrances, when combined together in the same garden create unbelievably luscious scents that can help to heal the mind, body and soul.

Behnke Nurseries in Beltsville will stock many of these bulbs and perennials in the fall when it's time to plant. They are a full service garden center with an amazing array of choices for creating an entire garden. Their knowledgeable staff will help you design just the look that will satisfy you visually and give you that sense of calm that we all need occasionally. Remember, when you plant bulbs, you harvest smiles — a great stress reliever! ☐

Editor's Note:

Based in Gloucester, Virginia, Brent and Becky's Bulbs has brought new excitement to year-round bulb gardening. Look for a selection of Brent and Becky's Bulbs at Behnke's this fall and visit their website at BrentandBeckysBulbs.com



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