

How to Plant a Miracle

As we prepare to put our gardens to bed for the winter, and face all the end-of-summer tasks, we can also look forward to the pleasures of planning our gardens and planting flowering bulbs for the spring. The next two months are the ideal time to plant bulbs — both for indoor enjoyment and for a beautiful spring in your garden.

Behnke's Garden Shop carries an amazing selection of bulbs, corms and tubers. Brilliant daffodils, colorful tulips, fragrant hyacinths and many unusual bulbs not commonly found elsewhere fill the shelves. Selecting your bulbs early and planting now will help make your garden a showplace in spring, and will bring a hint of springtime color and fragrance to your home.

Outside, your bulbs can be planted in a formal garden or massed in a natural fashion. "Naturalizing" gives the viewer the impression that the bulbs were planted by Mother Nature herself, then left to spread and flower by themselves. To be effective, this look generally takes a large area, but with careful planning, small spaces can also provide good results. Narcissus or crocus scattered under a small tree, a bed of daffodils under the mailbox, or wood hyacinths under your spring-blooming cherry trees can bring a look of casual beauty to these areas. Formal beds, carefully planned, can bring a long season of springtime bloom if early, mid and late flowering varieties are chosen. The staff at Behnke's Garden Shop can help you select top quality bulbs that will give you a long season of bloom, and can give you tips on how to properly prepare the soil for a bulb garden.

Enhance a deck or patio with a container of spring-blooming bulbs. Fill the container with a good potting soil. The container can be left outside in a sheltered area or brought into the garage to prevent the bulbs from freezing. Water the bulbs regularly, and you'll be rewarded as leaves pop through the soil in January. Plant snow crocuses for early bloom, larger crocus and narcissi for mid bloom, and tulips to provide the grand finale.

For a prolonged show of indoor color and fragrance, start planting bulbs for forcing now and continue by planting a different container each week. You'll be rewarded with weeks of color in your home — for a fraction of the cost of fresh flowers. Vary the containers you use — baskets lined with Spanish moss, shallow bowls filled with small pebbles, clay flower pots decorated with twine, kitchen crockery and Oriental vases are some easy-to-find solutions. Plan to spend some time in our Garden Shop selecting your bulbs and containers — come spring, you'll be glad you did!

—Judith Conway

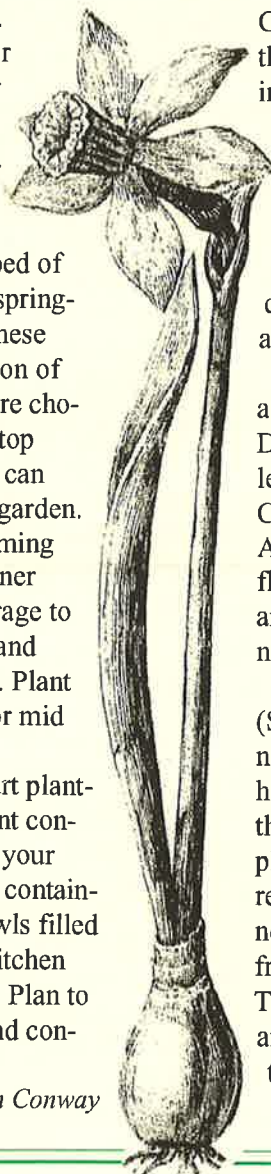
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

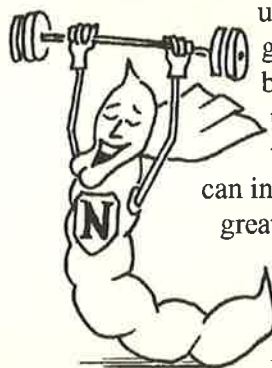
Coming soon to a garden near you, "The Good, the Bad, and the Besieged"—the tragic tale of a simple homeowner, Guy Goodplant, and the garden he is trying to save from the ruthless clutches of Carl Cutworm and his roving band of thug-bugs. This tale has all of the intrigue of a good spy novel and all of the adventure of a Bond film as Guy Goodplant teams up with newcomer Newton Nematode to form an invincible duo. Together they turn the tables on Carl Cutworm and his gang, creating a garden free from oppression and late night snacking.

Okay, I know this plot line sounds a bit bizarre, but check *your* garden! Do your plants suffer from cutworms, leaf miners, squash vine borers, Colorado potato beetles, or the like? And check your ankles! Do you have fleas in your lawn? If your answer to any of these questions is yes, you may need a partner like Newton Nematode.

Newton is a member of the *Sc* (*Steinernema carpocapsae*) species of nematode. Although he and the rest of his family are parasites (and I mean that in the nicest possible way), to plants and pets they are allies and often referred to as "beneficial". As *Sc* nematodes begin their lives, they hatch from eggs and go in search of food. This quest for food is the reason they are so special. *Sc* nematodes have a taste for the larval stages of many

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undesirable lawn and garden insects. And because they are so tiny (microscopic), thousands of them can inhabit a small area, greatly reducing a gardener's problem without harming the environment. No wonder their eating

habits have earned them the title "fastest acting microbial biological control".

How do you go about inviting Newton and his family over for dinner? That's the easy part. Just call your local garden shop and ask about beneficial nematodes. The Garden Shop here at Behnke's carries Nature Gard® and Biosafe®. These commercially packaged nematodes are sold in a semi-hydrated state either as a powder or embedded in a sponge. After you mix them with water, apply them to the ground immediately with a sprayer or watering can. The nematodes are generally effective for about 6 weeks. For the best results, read the instructions thoroughly before opening the container. Remember, nematodes are living creatures; if you do not follow the directions carefully, you can kill them.

If fleas are plaguing your pets or if your garden is having problems with beetle grubs, chafers, boring insects (not to be confused with boring in-laws), or any of the aforementioned thug-bugs, invite a beneficial nematode to lunch. And if you're thinking that chemicals would be easier, keep in mind that most chemicals are not insect-specific. They will kill beneficial insects along with destructive ones, leaving your garden more susceptible to future infestations. If you can catch a problem in the garden before it gets out of hand — try a biological control. A problem caught early is a problem solved easily.

—Susan O'Hara

The Secret to His Success

Albert Behnke knew that quality plants were only part of a healthy garden. Well-prepared soil, he proclaimed, is essential to insure long term success. And Albert practiced what he preached. When his home was built in 1964, truckloads of topsoil were brought in to provide a rich foundation for his gardens. Before planting, drain tiles were added to improve drainage and organic matter was incorporated into the soil. Albert continued to add superior fertilizers and more organic material every year, resulting in a rich, friable, fertile soil.

When building homes today, developers often remove the precious topsoil, leaving clay for the garden base. Planting in this terra-cotta muck is like trying to garden in a brick. The roots of most plants never grow out of the original hole, which usually is not big enough. This can result in stunted growth, and lead to a host of other problems such as diseases and insect infestations.

Well-prepared soil is the way to assure any plant's success. Behnke garden experts recommend that you add organic amendments to our clay-based soil. These amendments are the backbone of soil improvement. They can soften the clay, correct the pH of your soil, and add space between the soil particles which will allow plant roots to come in contact with water, oxygen and nutrients. Early autumn, before rains and snows have begun, is one of the best times of year to improve your soil.

You also need to test your soil's pH. The pH of the soil affects the plant's ability to use nutrients and thus directly affect its growth. Behnke's carries a home pH Test Kit (\$4.99) as well as a pH meter (\$22.99). You can also call the Maryland Extension service at (800) 342-2507 for information on their soil testing services.

It is always a good idea to add an organic fertilizer such as Espoma's Garden-Tone and Plant-Tone to your soil each year to replenish the nutrients lost during the growing season.

As with people, a good neighborhood produces good plants. If the soil is well prepared, any quality plant will excel. If the ground is not improved, any plant will fail to live up to its full potential.

—John Peter Thompson

John Peter Thompson, grandson of Rose and Albert Behnke, is Director of the Behnke Nurseries Perennial Department.

An Old Family Recipe

Years ago, Albert Behnke advised his customers, "Put a one dollar plant in a five dollar hole." Of course in those days, soil was dirt cheap. And while at today's prices, you will spend a little more, you really can consider it an investment. Good soil is a gardener's gold. It increases in value as time goes by. We recommend as a quick rule of thumb the following proportions of amendments to your existing soil:

- ◆ 1/3 Canadian peat
- ◆ 1/3 topsoil, peat humus *or* fine chip bark
- ◆ 1/3 of the existing soil



Behnke's Gardening Tips

September

Plan your spring bulb garden now. You'll be ready for planting later this month, and if you purchase your bulbs now, you'll get the best selection.

Now is the time to divide daylilies and spring-blooming perennials, including iris and peonies.

Summer isn't over yet! Continue to water regularly.

Superphosphate applied now will coax stubborn plants into bloom next year.

If you haven't discovered pansies yet you're in for a pleasant surprise. Planted in the fall, pansies continue to bloom off and on throughout fall and winter. In spring, they are well established and bloom profusely until the hot weather arrives in summer.

Don't be tempted to prune your spring flowering plants now—you'll destroy next year's buds.

Now is an ideal time to re-seed your lawn. Call or visit our Garden Shop for expert advice, or pick up our free lawn care pamphlet.

October

Most houseplants should be indoors before the first frost, which usually occurs around the 15th of the month.

Take down birdhouses, clean with soapy water, rinse well, and store for the winter. Set up bird feeders.

Clean out garden ponds and pools. Cover with netting before the onslaught of autumn leaves.

Dig up summer-flowering bulbs, such as dahlias, cannas, tuberous begonias, caladiums, and gladiolus after the frost kills the top growth. Treat them with bulb dust, pack them in peat moss, and store in a ventilated box for the winter.

Determine the pH level of your soil. Use a soil test kit, or a pH meter. A reading of 6.5 is about right for vegetables and most flowers.

Apply lime now if you need to raise the pH of your soil. The freezing and thawing of the soil helps to break down the lime so it will be accessible to plant roots in spring.

Spray Wilt-pruf on broadleaf evergreens to prevent moisture-loss during the winter.

November

Remove all fallen leaves from your lawn. If they become trapped under snow and ice during the winter, they'll kill the grass under them.

Before the winter cold sets in, all landscape plants should be well watered.

Plant tulips, hyacinths, crocus, and other spring-flowering bulbs now, before the ground freezes.

Winterize your lawn mower: drain the fuel or add a gas conditioner, disconnect the spark plug and store the mower in a protected spot. Or better still, buy a reel mower!

December

Prepare a hole for your Living Christmas Tree. The ground may well be frozen if you wait until after the holidays.

Protect shrubs, perennials, and other garden plants from extreme soil temperatures by applying 2 to 3 inches of mulch, leaves, or pine needles.

Stop feeding fish in garden ponds. When the water temperature falls below 45°, fish can no longer digest food.

Holiday plants like cool temperatures indoors. Keep them away from drafts and heat sources.

Poinsettias do not like wet feet. When watering, remove the ornamental foil or pot cover, water well and allow to drain. Then drop the plant back into the decorative covering.

Jump In!



Rake in the Fun this Fall at Behnke's

Largo

Spring Fling & Winter Extravaganza

Saturday, September 23 - 10 AM to 4 PM

Plan ahead for a beautiful garden this winter and next spring.

Featuring special sale prices on many items, such as flowering cabbage and kale, bulbs, lawn care products, and more.

Seminars

- Bulbs for Beauty - 10AM
- Fall Lawn Care for Spring Success - 11AM
- Plants for Winter Interest - 2PM
- Attracting Wildlife to your Garden - 3PM

Hayrides

Weekends, September 30 - October 29

Children of all ages will love this old-fashioned ride around our farm in Largo, Maryland. Every half-hour from 10 AM till 3:30 PM. Adults: \$1.00, Kids: 12 and under 50¢; 4 and under free.

Autumn on the Farm

Sat. & Sun. October 7 & 8 - 10 AM to 4 PM

Fresh air, wide open spaces and lots of fun. Special prices, too, on many items.

- Artisans demonstrate basketmaking, quilting, weaving, and blacksmithing
- Fresh vegetable market by "From the Ground Up", a community farm project
- Fresh bake sale by local charitable groups
- Audubon Naturalist Society display

For Kids

Petting Zoo • Hayrides •
Face Painting • Scarecrow Building •
Pumpkin Painting

Beltsville

Oktoberfest

Sat. & Sun. October 14 & 15, 10 AM to 5 PM

Special sale prices and lots of fun and good food for everyone.

- Sale prices in every department!
- Traditional Bavarian folkdance & music
- Refreshments, including German bratwurst and sauerkraut
- Fresh apple cider
- Bake sale by local charities

For Kids

Clowns • Face Painting • Pumpkin
Painting • The Impossible Maze •
Oldfangled Children's Games •
Scenic Model Train

Net proceeds from food sales will be donated to Children's Hospital National Medical Center

Christmas Shop

Opens October 14th

You'll be enchanted by our one-of-a-kind holiday shop featuring a charming collection of gifts and decorations. Old world blown glass, hundreds of tree trim ornaments, and original stocking stuffers, too. You'll find what you're looking for or something even better!

Autumn Flower Show

Saturday, October 21 - Noon to 4 PM

You'll find blooming specimens of your favorite fall bloomers. Plenty of expert advice and enthusiasm, too!

Potomac Chrysanthemum Society Show

Chesapeake & Potomac Reblooming Iris Show

For more information: Beltsville (301) 937-1100, Largo (301) 249-2492

Did you know...

- ❑ That Behnke's carries one of the finest selections of mums you'll find anywhere? These huge mums are loaded with flowers, and priced at only \$4.99 for a 9" pot! Come see our mums, you'll notice the difference!
- ❑ That we offer our nursery-grown mums for fall fund raisers? If purchased in quantity, churches, schools and other organizations can purchase beautiful Behnke mums at special prices.
- ❑ That Behnke's has a new Holiday Decorating Service? Let us create a traditional Christmas for you, indoors or out, with little disruption to your normal activities. Our staff will decorate your home, church, or offices in the Behnke manner — festive lights, fresh greenery, ribbons and more....
- ❑ That our Perennial Department carries over **1500 varieties** of hand-selected perennials? Fall is a great time to plant perennials, and our knowledgeable staff is always here to help with your gardening questions.
- ❑ That our Florist Department now offers delivery to the Bowie area? You can order your arrangements and rest secure that the recipient will receive the high quality flowers that have made Behnke's famous for over 65 years!
- ❑ That Behnke's has installed a new phone service to expedite your calls? Each department now has its own voice mail and you can leave a message for anyone you can't immediately reach. We're getting used to it—bear with us!

For more information call (301) 937-1100.

Looking ahead to the Holidays

Christmas Shop Opening

Our shop, which opens October 14th, features an enchanting collection of gifts and decorations — the best of the old and new. We have Department 56's line of collectable houses and accessories, and an amazing selection of Santas, glass ornaments and more!

Children will love the holiday railroad and the animated figures in our decorated windows. Our elves have made a special effort to preserve the tradition and magic of Christmas past. Come, visit and be enchanted.

Holiday Open House

Mark your calendars now! Our traditional Holiday Open House will be held on Thursday evening, November 16,



from 6 to 9 P.M. There'll be music, refreshments, how-to demonstrations and an opportunity to catch the Christmas spirit as our holiday lights, animated figures and Christmas railroad come to life.

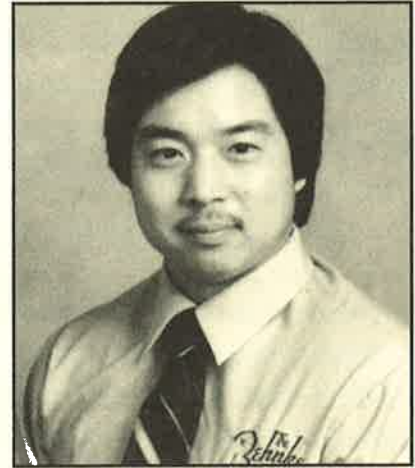
Enter drawings for wreaths, centerpieces and poinsettias. You're invited! Please join us for our Open House on November 16th!

Behnke Quality Poinsettias

You'll love Behnke poinsettias, grown with care in our own greenhouses. These newer varieties have an abundance of longer lasting flowers which contrast nicely with the lush dark green foliage. Choose from a variety of colors, including red, creamy white, pink, or marbled pink and white.

Meet:

Hank Doong



Hank began his career at Behnke Nurseries when he was a boy of 14. During his years here, he completed high school and obtained a degree in Ornamental Horticulture from the University of Maryland. Today he is our Head Grower and Director of Annuals. Hank and his wife Susan have a delightful young son named Simon.

Hank shares this anecdote about Mr. Albert Behnke, founder of Behnke Nurseries:

"As a fourteen-year-old boy, I was sent to Mr. Behnke's estate to move 100 dogwood trees from one area to another. The trees were three times my size and weight. I told Mr. Behnke that I didn't know how to use the tractor, which was standing by. He replied 'zat's too bad, you'll have to move zem wiss a wheelbarrow.' I never worked so hard in my life to finish a job as quickly as possible. When Mr. Behnke returned, he gave me a compliment that I will always treasure. He said 'I sought you didn't know how to drive za tractor?!'"

Albert Behnke passed away in 1992 at the age of 88. But he lives on in the hearts of those who enjoyed the privilege of working for him. For, although he did insist on hard work, he raised his many apprentices to excellence. And he was truly beloved by his family, friends and employees.

Design for the Do-it-Yourselfer

Would you like to create and plant your own dream garden? Behnke's will help you do it!

An experienced Behnke designer will work with you to plan your landscape to achieve the effects you want. You'll get professional advice on plant selection and garden design — at very little cost! Here's how it works...

A consultation takes place at our Beltsville or Largo location. Our designer will give your project personal attention, discussing options for planting a specific area or offering general advice on an entire property. The fee for this service is \$50 for a one hour consultation.

If you decide to purchase your plants at Behnke's you'll receive, *free of charge*:

- ◆ a detailed sketch of your design
- ◆ an itemized plant list
- ◆ installation guidelines

Your investment will assure the right plant for the right place. Our service will also give you tips that will help you plant and maintain your garden with little effort. That means less work and more time in the hammock enjoying your creation.

For more information, ask for our free brochure or set up an appointment with our designers by calling (301) 937-1100.

Happy planting!

What's New?

Flower Carpet Rose

This new rose, just-introduced from Germany, promises to be the answer to every gardener's dream. A trouble-free rose, one that blooms all summer, requires no spraying or dusting, and keeps its glossy green foliage all season. The bushes are dense and compact, with iridescent rosy-pink flowers, six to eight inches in diameter, growing in clusters with approximately 18 blooms per cluster. The flowers exhibit the old-world charm of luscious color and subtle fragrance.

The Flower Carpet Rose readily blooms from May to October in our area. In nursery trials, it required little care, even in winter. While other roses require careful pruning, Floral Carpet needs only one hard cut annually with hedge shears.

It is a low, compact rose that is ideal for ground covering, borders or edging.

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 11300 Baltimore Ave. (US Rt. 1) 20705
 Florist (301) 937-4032
 Landscaping (301) 937-4035
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 700 Watkins Park Dr. (Rt. 193) 20774



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