



# Bear Creek Press

*'Plants for the Masses'*

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## New Plant Issue #1

Springtime is new plant time at Bear Creek Nursery. Each winter, as a new batch of perennials, annuals and herbs arrive, we ooh and aah at the fascinating foliage, fabulous flowers and frivolous fragrances. We wish we could provide photographs; words rarely can properly describe the delicate features of these plants. There are lots of new varieties to discuss, so we'd better get to work.

## New Annuals

With the huge selection of annuals available at nurseries, it is always fun to have a few new choices to try in the summer garden. One of our favorites from last year was an African daisy named osteospermum. The purple flowers rose above the foliage as soon as they were planted and didn't stop until November. These nonstop performers even took a frost and kept on blooming.

This year there is a new color and a new form. The primrose African daisy is pleasantly pale yellow, a color that will combine well with almost any other flower. Nasingo purple is a rare spoonbill form of osteospermum. The long daisy petals widen at the ends giving this flower a unique form. The purple color is handsome in the flower bed or in a mixed planter.

Nemesia is another heat tolerant annual that should be used more often. Delicate green leaves cloak this one foot tall plant. The show of flowers then takes over, with orchid like blooms smothering the mound of foliage. The name Mango does not do justice to the lovely blend of cream and oranges in these flowers. A center highlight of dark blue accents the bloom, making it an irresistible addition to the garden.

Our love affair with coleus continues this summer with many tried and true favorites as well as more than a few new offerings. Traditionally used in the shade garden, many new choices have been bred for the sun, bringing out the bold colors in the leaves. Three new types this year are great for mixed planters or as bedding plants in full sun. Needlepoint, Oompah and Merlin's Magic are delicately leaved specimens with a mix of splashy color. Although these are all quite colorful, Merlin's Magic especially reminds me of 'spin art', those childhood attempts at art, where in youthful exuberance we tried to apply as many colors as possible to a spinning piece of paper.

One other new variety is best used in the shade. The Kong series is being heavily promoted by the growers and with good reason. The Kong coleus have the largest leaves of any coleus and are a stand-out for providing color in a shady location. The mosaic form has a tricolor leaf with splashes of white on a green field and red highlights overlaid in irregular patterns. The many forms of coleus are heat lovers and offer a perfect plant for any garden situation.

## New Herbs

If you like a cool, refreshing flavor in your summer recipes, mint is a suburb ingredient. One new offering is apple mint. Lightly fuzzy leaves lend this mint a soft feel and hold a unique taste. Use apple mint in teas, in salads or as a garnish.

Variegated peppermint offers the traditional flavor of mint with an ornamental twist. Dark shiny leaves generously splashed with white variegation make this mint handsome as well as tasty. Yummy in teas, peppermint is also attractive enough to use in a mixed container planting on the porch or patio.

There are many forms of the popular herb thyme. Besides being a flavorful addition to soups and meat dishes, thyme works overtime in the garden or landscape. The heat and drought resistant members of this family work well as a sun loving groundcover. Smaller leaf forms of creeping thyme are excellent as filler in rock walls & gardens. They also handle foot traffic, making them perfect for use in pathways between stepping stones. Oh yes, did we mention that deer will leave these herbs alone?

This year two new tiny thymes are available for this purpose. Highland Cream thyme is handsome creeping thyme with delicate variegation on each leaf. Cream color edges make this an outstanding choice for a groundcover or spilling over the edges of pots.

Thymus minus is the most delicate form of creeping thyme, with its gazillion tiny leaves creating a tight mat of thyme-ly-ness. Most thymes are evergreen and are smothered in pink or red flowers each spring.

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# New Ornamental Grasses

Grasses that flower should be included in every garden for many reasons. Heat and drought tolerance and resistance to deer browse are certainly important excuses to employ these tough members of the plant world. Overlooked by flower-centric gardeners, however, grasses offer subtle textures and colors, often at times when the rest of the garden is waning.

Sedges are short members of the grass family and are compact enough to be used in beds or mixed containers. Two new varieties that are sun or shade tolerant are 'Bronzita' which has a reddish color and 'Amazon Mist', a bluish form. Both grow about one foot tall in a mound shape and combine well with most flowering plants.

Muhly Grass, a southern U.S. native, is continuing its march northward, proving its hardiness here in the Ozarks. A soft grass that grows to 2-3 feet tall, Muhly grass bursts into airy clouds of pink in late September. One of the newer grasses we have trialed, this adaptable native is outstanding in the summer and fall garden.

Sometimes seen on the roadsides in the Ozarks, Bottlebrush grass has been around for a while. Its extreme heat & drought tolerance makes this grass an effective addition to tough garden spots. It is adaptable to poor soil and shady locations. In midsummer, three foot flower heads rise above the foliage and eventually dry into handsome forms. These

'bottlebrushes' make great dried arrangements or look good for months if left on the plant. This special plant is often overlooked in nurseries.

Dwarf Pampas Grass is a South American native that has created a place in our hearts north of the border. This shorter form is the answer to the less hardy, short lived Pampas Grass that is popular in the south. The dwarf variety is fully hardy in the Ozarks and creates a show stopping display of plumes for over six months. The thick white flowers emerge in August and stand well above 4' tall foliage. Turning buff color in the fall, the flowers look like grass fireworks throughout the winter.

Now Open Monday-Saturday 9:00 ~5:00 – Sunday 11:00~4:00

## Artistic Expression

Some friends were recently landscaping their home and mentioned that they wanted to make their new garden "artistic". This comment made me think about the personal nature of gardens and how *all* gardens are different, individualistic, personal and therefore "artistic". It reminds me of a friend who wanted advice on her yard. As she described the plants, it became apparent how personal the yard was. One rose was from her father who has since passed away. A lilac came from her grandmother's home place. There were bulbs purchased on holiday in Ireland and a fabulous stone given by a friend. Another rose was a Valentine's Day gift and other plants were from her mom. The garden was so personal, so special that I could not suggest any improvements. All the plants were so significant to the garden and her life, that they had to remain. This personal nature of a garden is what makes every garden important and why all gardens are truly artistic.

## Our Favorite Miss Pronunciations

No one should make fun of misunderstandings, especially when it comes to tongue twisting plant names. But every once in a while we are asked for plants that are, well, humorously misidentified. It is hard to decide whether to correct the mistakes or to just smile. These are our favorites from last year.

Miss Kansas, for the maiden grass, Miscanthus, Waving Petunias, for the ubiquitous new (and old) Wave Petunias, and this year's winner, which needs no explanation: Knocked Up Roses.



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