

MICHIGAN GARDENER

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in this issue

PERENNIALS
Foamflower

PROFILE
An Asian-inspired garden

PLANT FOCUS
Impatiens alternatives

TREE TIPS
Lightning and
how it affects trees

FEATURE
Uncommonly beautiful
and easy-to-prune clematis





Where the season is taking root.

Telly's Spring Events

TROY EVENTS

Roses: Six Steps to Jump Start Your Roses for Spring
Sat, April 6, 10am

Ready, Set, Grow!
Sat, April 6, 11am

PERENNIAL GARDENING DAY

Saturday, April 13
• New Perennials for 2013, 10am
• Attracting Butterflies & Hummingbirds, 1pm

Herb of the Year: Elderberry Lecture
Thursday, April 18, 6:30pm

ANNUAL GARDENING DAY

Saturday, April 20
• New Annuals for 2013, 10am
• High Impact Annuals for the Landscape & Containers, 11:30am
• Annuals for the Cutting Garden, 1pm
• Impatiens Alternatives: Dealing with Downy Mildew, 2pm
• Annuals for the Perennial Border, 3pm

Every Garden Deserves a Rose. Which one is right for Yours?
Thursday, April 25, 6:30pm

Outdoor Miniature Gardening Workshop
Saturday, April 27, 10am

Alpine Trough Planting Workshop
Saturday, April 27, 1:30pm
April 27, 1pm - \$35

Getting to Know Dahlias
Thursday, May 2, 6:30pm - FREE

Dahlia Tuber Sale Saturday
May 4, 9am - FREE

CONTAINER GARDENING DAY

Saturday, May 4
• Container Gardening Class, 10am
• Container Gardening Workshop, 11:30am
• Herbs in Containers Workshop, 1pm

Class fee \$5 unless otherwise noted (materials not included). Registration required— Please call 248-689-8735.

SHELBY TOWNSHIP EVENTS

Trough Making Workshop
Sat, April 13, 2pm - \$35

New Annuals for 2013
Sat, April 27, 10am

New Perennials for 2013
Sat, April 27, 11:30am

Every Garden Deserves a Rose, Which One is Right for Yours?
Sat, April 27, 1pm

CONTAINER GARDENING DAY

Saturday, May 4
• Container Gardening Class, 1pm
• Container Gardening Workshop, 2pm

VISIT TELLYS.COM FOR MORE EVENT INFORMATION

TROY

248-689-8735
3301 John R—1/4 mile north of Mile Rd.

SHELBY TOWNSHIP

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HOURS: Please call or visit tellys.com

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Garden Wisdom

I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose, I would always greet it in a garden.

—Ruth Stout

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On the cover: Tulips are a welcome springtime sight to Michigan gardeners.

Photo: Eric Hofley/Michigan Gardener

To Our Readers...

After a relatively “normal” winter here in Michigan, we welcome another gardening season! Maybe the biggest news of the spring will be the situation with impatiens and downy mildew disease. This will be akin to, “Is the glass half empty or half full? Rather than focusing on the impatiens problem, we encourage local gardeners to experiment and try some new and different plants.

To help with that process, we are publishing a special three-part series: “Impatiens Alternatives.” Look for Part 1 of 3 on page 14 of this issue. Please note that our E-Newsletter subscribers will be the first to receive this special report in the FREE *Michigan Gardener* E-Newsletter. Just another reason to sign up! Go to MichiganGardener.com and simply enter your e-mail address.

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perennial perspectives

Something old, something new – a comparison of new cultivars with the tried-and-true

Foamflower (*Tiareella*)

With their demure white or pink flowers and distinctive foliage, foamflowers, once known only to native plant enthusiasts, have taken their place alongside popular plants like coral bells and ferns as favorite shade perennials.

When I first started growing perennials in the 1970s, there were only two forms of foamflower commonly available to gardeners. They were referred to as *Tiareella cordifolia* and *Tiareella wherryi*, the first being a running, groundcovering form, and the latter having a clumping habit. Sorting out the differences in the genus

has kept botanists busy for decades, and there is still much confusion about the native Eastern U.S. tiarella species, forms, and varieties.

The consensus now is that the correct name for the common running or Allegheny foamflower is *T. cordifolia* var. *cordifolia*, and the clumping type formerly known as *T. wherryi* should be called



T. cordifolia var. *collina* Wherry, in honor of botanist and mineralogist Edgar Wherry. This form differs from *T. cordifolia* var. *collina* in that the Wherry form has lightly hairy, matte-textured foliage while the var. *collina* has glossy foliage. However, it is still commonplace to see these three *Tiareella cordifolia* forms referred to as though they were distinct species.

Regardless of nomenclature, the original native foamflowers are beautiful and useful plants for the woodland garden. Because *T. cordifolia* is so variable in natural populations, the first horticultural varieties were selections from the wild, chosen for more pronounced burgundy blotches or striations, more floriferous habit, deeper pink flower color, or unusual leaf shapes (dissected, as opposed to the simple maple-leaf shape). Examples include 'Brandywine' and 'Slick Rock,' two running forms of *T. cordifolia* var. *cordifolia*, and 'Oakleaf,' a dissected-leaf selection from *T. cordifolia* var. *collina* Wherry. These varieties are still widely available and used in gardens today.

Early hybrids made during the 1980s utilized *T. cordifolia* in all of its forms and variations. When the Western species *T. trifoliata* and its variants were added to the mix, the resulting gene pool was so large that a literal explosion of new hybrids emerged. Thanks to plant breeders Charles Oliver from the Primrose Path, Dan Heims from Terra Nova, and



'Delaware'



'Susquehanna'



'Sugar and Spice'

botanists/nurserymen like Sinclair Adam and Don Jacobs, scores of varieties are now available to gardeners—a far cry from the “running versus clumping” categories available to me as a new gardener in the 1970s.

Foamflowers today

Foamflowers now run the gamut from lush groundcovering forms, to small rock garden-sized plants, to big brightly-colored glossy-leaved specimens. There's a tiarella for any gardener, and for any shaded to semi-shaded garden. In nature, the original species and



'Spring Symphony'

forms can be found anywhere from Nova Scotia south to Georgia, and west to Wisconsin, with *T. cordifolia* var. *cordifolia* having the widest distribution. The *collina* and Wherry forms are native to the more southern range, but their hybrids have proven hardy and long-lived over most of the Eastern, Midwestern, and Northwestern states.

Foamflowers prefer moist but well-drained soils and are not well-suited to arid regions or sites with drying winds. They are more tolerant of high humidity than their cousins, coral bells (*Heucheras*), which makes them an ex-

cellent choice for Midwestern and Southern gardens.

It is hard to pick favorites among the many foamflower hybrids available, but you should first decide if you want a *running* or *clumping* habit.

Among the **running** types, the American Trail series from Terra Nova and the River Series from Sinclair Adam are some of the best in the business. Look for names like 'Appalachian Trail,' 'Oregon Trail,' and 'Cascade Creeper' from the Terra Nova group. Plants in the River Series were named after rivers in




always in season!

APRIL 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

✦ **APRIL 14: GREAT LAKES GARDENS OPENING** Join us in celebrating the Great Lakes' natural heritage, and visit throughout the year as the Great Lakes Gardens evolve with plantings of native orchids, ferns, wildflowers, and more. Opening day includes guided tours. Rain or shine. 2 PM.

✦ **APRIL 20 & 21: ANN ARBOR ORCHID SOCIETY FESTIVAL** Celebrating the Society's 20th anniversary. With tropical and hardy orchids for sale and on display, orchid raffle, orchid-growing supplies, and related items. Also, free educational talks, photo opps, demonstrations both days, and more. Sat. & Sun., 10 am-4:30.

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'Appalachian Trail'

the breeder's native Pennsylvania and include 'Susquehanna,' 'Delaware,' 'Lehigh,' and the earlier selection 'Brandywine.'

Choosing **clumping** foamflowers is perhaps harder because nearly all of the new hybrids feature fancy foliage: scalloped, lobed, dissected, marked with burgundy, and sometimes with excellent fall color. Plus they have larger, more profuse flowers that are more pink in many cases. You simply can't go wrong with 'Sugar and Spice,' 'Spring Symphony,' 'Pink Skyrocket,' or 'Candy Striper.'

There are some varieties, such as the beau-

tiful and extra long-blooming 'Elizabeth Oliver,' that are intermediate between the two growth habits. They produce a few short runners in late summer each year, resulting in a slowly spreading clump as years go by.

Tiarella is a genus that has come a long way in my 30-plus years of gardening. If you are a shade gardener, you owe it to yourself to try some of these delightful plants in your garden this year!

Karen Bovio is the owner of Specialty Growers in Howell, MI.

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