

The Kansas City
GARDENER

A Monthly Guide to Successful Gardening

May 2013



Heuchera & Heucherellas
for the Midwest

Fool-Proof Container Ideas
Gardenias Worth the Effort
Renown Peony Expert Sells
See inside for Garden Tours details

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See page 47.

 editor's notes

Goodbye white pine

On a cold spring morning, the crew arrived ready to work. The trailer was positioned to collect debris, the ropes and climbing gear laid out on the lawn, and the chainsaws fueled and ready to go. This was the day to say goodbye to an aging white pine.

For as long as we've lived next door, I've harbored mixed emotions about that tree. Measuring well over 65 feet tall, the top 25% was a healthy green and laden with pine cones. On a mild summer day, I enjoyed watching it gently sway in the breeze.

The lower portion was not so lovely, with symmetry lost long ago. The trunk was disfigured with stubs remaining from broken branches. Any weather event that included high winds, ice or heavy snow, those brittle branches would break off.

There's a row of 10-foot evergreens that create a natural border between our properties beneath the white pine. When large branches would crash into our garden, they would rip off evergreens limbs on the way down. Now *we've* got a symmetry problem.

As soon as I heard the chainsaw though, I started to have mixed emotions about removing that tree. It's provided lots of shade for my peonies from the scorching summer sun. The needles were terrific mulch. Birds and squirrels have established a homestead in those lofty limbs. And considering the age of this tree, it's a historical reminder of earlier days in our neighborhood.

With a few bittersweet tears welling up inside, I watched her slow and deliberate dismantling. The skilled crew was cautious and caring in bringing her down, one branch at a time. Goodbye old friend, thanks for the memories.

And as if right on cue, there was my husband at the window shouting "good riddance." Ahhh, never underestimate the sensitivity of a tree man, especially one that

cringed when the weather guys called for heavy winds and blowing snow.

With a noticeable change in the amount of sunlight entering the garden, he continues, "Maybe we'll get some decent tomatoes this year." He's right about that. Tomatoes soon to be planted in raised beds may actually produce higher yields with a couple more hours of sun. Fingers crossed.

For now though, in my quiet grief, I'll worry about courting birds that might return to a nesting site no longer there. (How disappointing that would be!) And what will the squirrels do when trying to escape the bite of my dog? Maybe a detour sign to the big oak? {grin}

I'll see you in the garden!

Elizabeth



In this issue

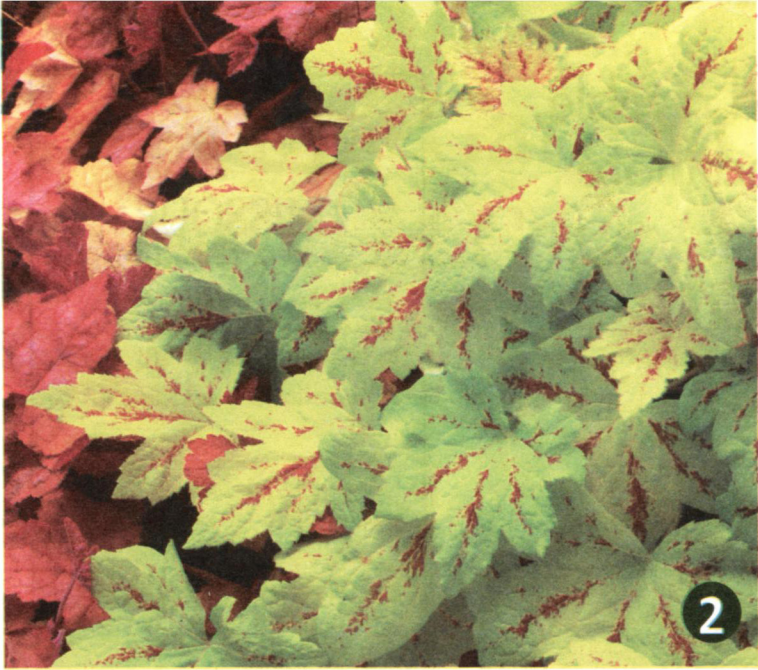
May 2013 • Vol. 18 No. 5

Ask the Experts	6	Black Diamond Crapemyrtles	27
Join Urban Grown Revolution	7	Midwest Water Garden	28
The Bird Brain	10	Weed control in veg garden	30
Paul James Celebrates NPGD	11	Planting for Butterflies	32
Fool-Proof Container Ideas	12	Foundation Makeovers	34
Nature Lover	14	Garden Calendar	37
Grow Native Baptisia	16	Upcoming Events	38
Historical Grandeur	18	Powell Garden Events	40
Rose Report	19	Hotlines	43
Gardenias worth the effort	20	Weather	43
Heuchera/Heucherellas	24	Professional's Corner	47

about the cover ...

'Berrie Smoothie' is on the list of Heuchera that perform well in our zone. See others along with Heucherella starting on page 24. Photo courtesy of Terra Nova Nurseries.





Heuchera & Heucherellas for the Midwest

There's a revolution going on in plant-breeding! Heuchera have followed Hosta as one of the most enticing and popular new genera to grace your garden. From the small smattering of varieties a decade ago; there are several hundred varieties available today from breeders across the globe. The color range of these plants has gone from green or faded burgundy leaves to the gamut of minty green, to reds, yellows, oranges, metallic purples, to nearly black. Flowers, once nondescript and short-blooming, are now larger, better-branched, and reblooming in pinks, reds, whites, and even primrose yellow!

"I live in the Midwest", you say "... they won't live here ..."

The fact is they can and do very well in the Midwest – the secret is *understanding* them.

Dan Heims speaks internationally on Heuchera and has written a book with Grahame Ware, *Heuchera and Heucherellas*, published by Timber Press. Dan is president of Terra Nova Nurseries – the leading breeding company of Heuchera in the world.

It is critical that an open ear is given to all gardeners from Overland Park to Orlando. Spending time on garden forums like Dave's Garden, and receiving feedback from garden writers who are sent sampler packs gives Terra Nova's breeders important information as to which varieties thrive in a particular area. This leads their pollen-dusted hands to combine the different Heuchera species that produce the strongest hybrids.

But, back to *understanding* them . . . Terra Nova often hears that Heuchera seem to do better in containers than in the ground. Why? Because to understand a plant – you must see it in its native habitat. In the case of Heuchera, they are often seen on composted, perfectly drained forest floor or on rock cracks or in sandy soils. Read this as a plea for perfect drainage

– which pots allow. So, what about the soil?

Clay abounds in the Midwest, and simply put – clay kills Heuchera. In Dan's garden, he raised all of the planting beds and supplemented the existing soil. In the Midwest, look for sources of Perma Till® (expanded shale), fine gravel, and especially compost. Aged horse manure adds some bulk and extra nutrients. The forums showed that those in the Midwest who followed these practices had terrific success.

How much sun do Heuchera need? A fair amount, actually. While H. 'Green Spice' thrives in deep shade, most of today's hybrids prefer morning sun while getting protection from the hottest rays of the day. Careful siting of a plant or a shrub (to provide afternoon shade) is essential. Heucherellas – hybrids between Heuchera and shade-loving Tiarellas are best treated like Heuchera. A few, like H. 'Yellowstone Falls' – a trailing variety, prefers moderate shade. Heuchera do not need much fertilizer, so a teaspoon of time-released fertilizer, like Osmocote®, per plant in spring is plenty.

Maintenance of this group is laughably easy. In spring, trim off the old leaves, feed, and cut back a few of the long "necks" – and they will branch and resprout in the coming weeks. **Gardeners have found that if you dig the plant up, divide it, and rebury the plant deeper than before, they are rewarded with a reinvigorated plant.** This section is emboldened as it is a very important maintenance step to be done every 2 to 3 years. Finally, mulching the plants with bark or chopped leaves (as occurs in nature) tends to prevent some of the frost-heaving that can tear plants apart.

Pests are few, the worst being the antlered kind. The next worst is the black vine weevil that chews leaf edges in early June and has grubs that overwinter underground. These happily munch the rhizomes

of a number of plants and are whitish, about a half-inch long and have a darker head and a "c" shape. Watch for plants that look very wilted or collapsed. You can save healthy rhizomes (stems) and rebury them in a different spot after a visual inspection for the beasties. One good, organic solution for killing the grubs is to pour hot water (over 100 degrees F) over the damaged plant. Nematodes may be used in September to control the grubs. Remember to water **before** and **after** application to get these guided missiles into the ground.

Selecting the best Heuchera and Heucherellas for the Midwest

The task was to come up with a list of Heuchera and Heucherella

that do best with USDA Zone 5 to 6 winters and summers of moderate heat and humidity. These come with the recommendations of trial gardens, garden writers, and individuals such as you, who have taken the time to post in internet plant forums. Plant name, foliage color, and flower color will be listed.

It is hoped that you can find some great plants for your garden in the KC area. Come by Terra Nova's website at: www.terravanurseries.com or friend us on Facebook to see the hottest new plants!

Article and photos courtesy of Terra Nova Nurseries, **Dan Heims**, www.terravanurseries.com.

Heuchera and Heucherella that do best in USDA Zone 5 to 6

Heuchera Name	Leaf Color	Flower Color
'Berry Smoothie' (1)	metallic pink	white w/red stems
'Blondie' (dwf)	warm brown-amber	primrose yellow rebloomer
'Caramel'	amber	cream
'Crisp' series	many	white
'Delta Dawn'	gold w/red overlay	white
'Electric Lime' (9)	lime-green, winter red veins	white
'Fire Alarm' (11)	coral-red	cream w/coral stems
'Georgia Peach'	coral-pink, silver overlay	white w/coral stems
'Lime Rickey'	ruffled yellow-lime	white
'Marmalade'	ruffled amber/orange/red	white
'Midnight Rose' (3)	shiny black w/pink spots	tiny purple-green
'Milan'	silvery pink	pink rebloomer
'Mocha'	pale brown	cream
'Obsidian'	shiny black	tiny purple-green
'Paprika' (5)	hot coral orange	white w/coral stems
'Purple Petticoats'	dark purple, ruffled	tiny purple-green
'Silver Scrolls'	silver	white
'Southern Comfort'	warm orange-brown	white
'Spellbound' (8)	metallic purple/silver	white
'Sugar Plum'	metallic purple	pink and white
'Sweet Tart'(dwf)(4)	lime-gold	rose-pink rebloomer
Heucherella Name	Leaf Color	Flower Color
'Alabama Sunrise' (6)	yellow and red	white
'Brass Lantern' (12)	brass and red	white w/dark stems
'Gold Zebra' (10)	cutleaf gold w/red	white
'Solar Power' (7)	gold w/red stippling	white
'Sunrise Falls' (2)	gold and red-trailing	white
'Sweet Tea'	orange and red	white

Heuchera and Heucherella with numbers are pictured opposite page.