

A few weeks ago I was delighted to rediscover the most charming little inter-city nursery. Berger's Nursery (now called Berger's Garden and Gifts) has been at the corner of Adele Avenue and Kitsap Way for at least thirty or forty years that I know of. Back in the seventies and early eighties my husband, Pat, and I on Sunday afternoons would load the kids in the car and drive to Berger's to walk through the nursery and of course purchase plants.

Berger's Garden and Gifts is now owned and operated by John and Theresa Dreany. John worked at Berger's during high school. Six years ago when the nursery came up for sale John and Theresa bought it. They have spent the last several years rejuvenating the nursery and their hard work is evident to visitors. They also own the other two buildings on the property – occupied by a dog grooming business and a very tempting shop called Mud Bay Coffee. You could bring your dog to the groomer, grab a steaming cup of coffee or an iced latte and head to Berger's for a shopping spree.

John runs their landscaping business. Photos of his installations are displayed on the walls near the checkout counter. Theresa manages the nursery and gift shop. They are parents of four growing boys. How they find time to do everything I can't imagine. But the nursery is a delight as are the installations John designs and executes.

Sharon Markey helps the Dreanys run the nursery. Sharon is a landscape designer and trained as a master gardener. In fact everyone that works at Berger's has either a degree in horticulture, landscape architecture or a nurseryman's certificate. Sharon said, "We have a great depth of experience. We're as close to a full service nursery as you can get for our size. We have art, gifts, statuary and gardening supplies. We have every plant you'd need for your garden on a city lot."

I wandered through the whole nursery. The nursery is extremely charming. The parking area faces a fence covered with massive, profusely festooned, hanging flower baskets. Each year Berger's will be taking orders in early spring for the baskets. You won't believe your eyes when you see them. They're incredibly floriferous and ever so colorful. I explored the nursery and as I was wandering through the vegetable starts I met customer, Martha Rouse. "I just love the atmosphere here. It's really peaceful and tranquil," she said.

I managed to take home two new plants. I bought *Lychnis Arkwrightii* (Maltese Cross) Orange Gnome, It's a deep black-purple plant with bright salmon-orange multi-petaled blossoms. Loves full sun and very well drained soil. The tag says "benefits from light shade in hot locations," which shouldn't be much of a problem here in the northwest. I also bought *Erodium chamaedryoides* Alpine Geranium 'Pink' which likes sun or shade and well-drained garden soil. I'm putting it in a small container made of hyper-tufa. (I'll tell you about hyper-tufa in a few weeks.)

I was smitten by several other plants. We're still renovating a major portion of our garden and aren't ready to plant yet, so I'll have to wait until fall to go back to buy them. The first plant is *Syringa patula* 'Miss Kim' (Miss Kim Lilac). Miss Kim has the best foliage. Even if she never blooms she'd be worth adding to any garden. Her new leaves are green edged with purple turning to solid dark purple with age. She has lavender blossoms and is hardy from -30 to -40 degrees. The tag said "grow in full sun in cool summer climates" (sounds like an ideal northwest plant to me). It also suggested planting her under a window to enjoy the fragrance of the flowers.

I almost hesitate telling you about this plant because it's a Silver Lace Vine *Polygonum auberti*. *Polygonum* is synonymous with growing rampantly in a garden. I suggest planting this incredibly fragrant vine in a whiskey barrel to control root-creeping. It's hardy from -30 to -20 degrees. The tag says keep moist until established and then it's drought tolerant. Sunset Western Garden Book says "Rapid growing; can cover 100 square feet in a season. Leaves - heart shaped, glossy, wavy edged. Flowers - creamy white, small, in frothy mass from late spring to fall. Use as fast-growing screen on fences or arbors, on hillsides, at seashore. You can prune severely (to ground) each year; bloom will be delayed until August." She's ever so tempting.

Visit Berger's. You'll find yourself surrounded by gorgeous, glorious plants and be tempted by all the gifts and garden art. Sharon Markey or Theresa Dreany will be there to help you with your gardening needs.

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