

DIG THIS for 3-24-04 By Peg Tillery (Great Plant Picks) , ©2005

I spoke at Savage Plants in Kingston last weekend and I could not resist bringing home several plants. These are perfect plants for our Northwest gardens and they're easy care but full of interest.

Three of my choices are from Nils Sundquist's nursery. Even before I knew Nils had a nursery, I was purchasing his plants from Savage Plants. Nil's opens his nursery on the Heronswood's open weekends. That way you can visit the Kingston area and take in the delights at all three places: Sundquist's on Sawdust Hill Road, Heronswood at 7530 NE 288th Street and Savage Plants on Bond Road. The next open house for both nurseries is April 9 and 10.

I am intrigued by *Hepatica*. It's a small liverwort in the *Ranunculaceae* family. This time of year the plant does not yet have leaves. Furry bronze stems end in narrow white sepals with numerous yellow stamens clustered in the center. The leaves emerge later and are quite leathery turning russet and purple with shadings of bronze. The blooms can last for two months or longer. In the winter do not remove the leaves because this perennial utilizes its decomposing leaves for nourishment. Nils says this plant is "extra nice with *Rhodies*." Plant it in a shade garden where there's humus.

Asplenium trichomanes Ebony Spleenwort is described by Nils as an "ungainly name, nice plant." I agree. This ethereal looking rock fern is delightful. It's described in some literature as maidenhair spleenwort. It's especially good in rocky or gravelly areas of the garden. Several years ago I succumbed to a large rock recommended by a friend. The rock is very lightweight (pumicey) and it can be dug out for planting. I'm finally going to get around to hollowing out a portion of the rock and will plant my Ebony Spleenwort there. The black stems of this fern are exquisitely appealing.

If you love forget-me-nots but don't like how they take over a garden and reseed profusely then instead you'll want to try *Brunera macrophylla* Siberian Forget-Me-Not (Bugloss). Bugloss is Greek for ox tongue perfectly describing the heart shape of *Brunera*'s leaves and the rough texture of both the leaves and stems. This plant is from the *Boraginaceae* family so you might want to keep an eye on it. Maybe it will be just like the other forget-me-nots. I felt it was worth the risk though because it's an appealing perennial with wonderful blue flowers alight tall stems creating a light airy effect. Flowers keep appearing from April through June. What more could a gardener ask?

My last treasure of the outing was *Sedum makinoi* 'Ogon.' If you've never found a sedum that liked shade then your search is over. *Sedum* 'Ogon' has glowing golden foliage. Do not even think about planting it in the sun. It will not be happy. Nor will you.

If you have a hankering for *Rhodies* or azaleas then this is the time of year for you. All our local nurseries are getting stock in daily. *Rhodies* give great structure to a garden and the blooms (though short-lived) are outstanding at a time when not much is blooming. My

husband is a rhodie and azalea junkie. We approached our habit with a plan though. We visited Whitney Gardens in Brinnon and their catalogue lists the blooming times for all their varieties. Pat and I chose rhodies to give us bloom from February through September (yes, September). We also chose rhodies with interesting leaves. We found variegated rhodies, rhodies with shades of furry velvety impeditum (on the underside of the leaf) in shades ranging from gold through crimson. We selected plants with leaves ranging in size from minute (1/3 inch) clear up to one foot. Leaf coloring ranges from chartreuse to dark bronze. The choices for rhodies are endless.

When you've checked out all the Rhodies in Kitsap County venture over to Whitney Gardens in Brinnon and also don't miss the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale Friday April 2 from 3-6 p.m. and Saturday April 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nils Sundquist supplies the Species Garden with wonderful native plants for sale. The Species Garden is at 2525 S. 336th Street in Federal Way at the Weyerhaeuser Corporation Headquarters. While you're there don't miss the Bonsai collection too.

Next week we'll talk about all the plant sales coming in late April and through the month of May. Mark your calendars now for the Kitsap Master Gardener Foundation Plant Sale at the Fairgrounds Cat Barn on Friday and Saturday May 8 and 9.

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