

LEAFLET

Twixwood Nursery · Fax (800)854-1754 · Phone (269)471-7408

Website: www.twixwood.com · P. O. Box 247, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

WINTER 2016

Rudbeckia newmannii ‘Summer Blaze’ is a fine plant. We were told at one time that this was superior to the regular *Rudbeckia fulgida* ‘Goldsturm’ and we have long-since forgotten why. I work on the theory that is a plant is a named variety that is asexually propagated and not sexually propagated that it has to be a better plant. We will be dividing and potting up liners of this plant this winter and expect to have somewhere in the neighborhood of 50,000 plugs available early next summer. We can make these in any size the customer wants and I am desperate to sell them in a small pot because if we put them all into gallon pots we will run out of room here at the nursery.

In the past we have attempted to sell ‘Summer Blaze’ as a substitute for the regular seed-grown ‘Goldsturm’ and have been unsuccessful. It looks a lot like ‘Goldsturm’ when I drive by a bunch of it. The customers may know what they are doing or they may just be suspicious of someone happily telling them that we are out of what they want but can substitute a superior plant for them. Maybe customers have been lied to once or twice in the past by someone somewhere. When we first started to grow this plant we told the customers that it was more compact, longer blooming, and less susceptible to black spot. I hope that these claims were true.

Geranium sanguineum ‘Alpenglow’ is another fine plant. In fact, most of the plants to be mentioned in this sales promotional flyer will be labelled as fine plants. We project having about 25,000 plugs of this plant available early next summer, 2016. This is a shorter version of the regular *geranium sanguineum*. It makes big mounds of color. One of the descriptions on the internet says that it grows in the shade, a claim I am suspicious of because later on in the very same description it is listed as a full-sun plant. Likewise, we want to sell these in a small pot before they end up in gallons and take over the nursery.

The astute reader doubtless wonders why smart people such as ourselves all of a sudden have so many liners of so many plants—there are more to come. The reason is because we inherited a big field planting at the T-North Farm, an 87 acre farm on pure sand with a big irrigation pond in one corner that never runs dry a twenty minute drive from our office. We needed to clean out some fields in order to fumigate and start the planting cycle all over again, this time without the dread yellow nutsedge. Some people plow up old fields when it is time to start over. I am a plant hoarder and cannot bear to do that, thus we dug acres of perennials that we are going to spend the winter dividing and potting up and forcing in early March. They tell me that therapy helps in these situations, the hoarding ones that is, and not the dividing and potting ones.

We will have a few heucheras and nepetas and salvias before the winter is over—you will be kept posted—and acres of *Iris* ‘Caesar’s Brother’ are still out there waiting. I was not responsible for the overplanting of these varieties; it is something that appeared to take on a life of its own up in that field. I subscribe to the old theory that worked well back in the glory years of the groundcover and perennial nursery busi-

2 WINTER 2016

ness—if you do not have it you cannot sell it.

The 2016 price list is a work in progress. I am not nearly as organized and disciplined a person as the one I replaced. We are pretty certain to not have the shrubs and fruits section. There will be a few fruits left over and they will be advertised when the numbers are firmed up. They tell me that ediscaping is the next big rage and if so, we are going to miss the first part of the curve on that one. I am long on French Tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus* ‘Sativa’) in 2 ½” pots. There is a long story as to why anyone would have too many of these plants. Anyhow, this is a very good strain of the real vegetative propagated plant. I got the mother plants in Maryland years ago. The astute reader will know to not get fooled with the seed grown Russian Tarragon, an entirely inferior plant. We can custom grow much more of this if anyone wants. As with all *Artemisias* the cuttings need to be taken very early in the Spring while it is cool and the plants just coming up.

The theory on offering shrubs in our catalog was that we were located an hour south of some of the better and larger shrub and rose container growers along this side of Lake Michigan and could thus purchase them at a good price and fill up our trucks for delivery to our customers; being the proverbial one-stop-shop. Various things have changed and we are no longer set up to offer this service. We do grow on site a couple shrubs: mostly lots of *Rhus* aromatic ‘Gro-Low’, a hardy and ugly shrub that was in great and intense demand in the Chicago area a few years ago. It grows well on traffic islands in the middle of large asphalted parking lots. We have many one and three gallon containers. Someday we will learn how to carefully shear them and then to space them so they look neat and compact. When they were in short supply we did not need to go to such unnecessary efforts.

Another change the alert reader will note in our upcoming new catalog is the dropping of the Nature’s Beautiful Perennial program listed on pages 34-35 in the 2015 catalog. That was one of those really good ideas that foundered on the shoals of implementation. The theory was to grow a whole bunch of nice little quarts of nicely blooming perennials to offer as a wide selection to the garden center trade in the spring. Our sales staff was supposed to pick out, on a weekly

basis, which varieties looked the best right then and the customer would purchase by the quantity and not by the variety. In theory the picking, pulling, selling, and shipping would be easier at this end and the garden center would have only good looking plants in bud and bloom to sell. It was not easy to do at this end and the customers were not happy at the other end, so that good idea has been dropped.

Nepeta x faassenii ‘Walker’s Low’ deserves a comment because some of our customers are surprised by the enthusiasm with which this plant grows. Some people say that this catmint grows to 2 ½’ high and some people say it will get 3’ tall. North Creek Nurseries describes it as being a “carefree mounding sprawler”. I will follow their lead and use the word ‘carefree’ instead of a more accurate describer in the future. A quick internet research effort revealed that the origin of this plant and its name is lost in the mists of mythology. It is said to have originated in an Irish nursery named Walker’s Low in the 1970’s but no one has located this nursery. We will be looking at more compact versions of this fine and floriferous plant to offer to our more discerning customers. You will be notified. In the meantime we have lots of this plant for this season and can offer it in whatever size you request as long as we are given some lead time to get it potted up.

This year we are offering some perennials in a one and a half quart size. These are more or less 5” square and 5 ½” deep with the legal volume of 1.5 quarts or 1.42 liters. They come 8 to a tray and the tray is a true 10” x 20” tray. The maker is Dillen and the number embossed on the pot is M-6 SQ. I hope this helps in the decision making process. Because these are a quart and a half we call them a half gallon; try to not think too hard about this one. The theory is that some landscapers may want a well-established perennial that is a little easier to plant, somewhat easier to carry as it is in a tray, and a lot easier to purchase because it is cheaper. The potential problem with this package is that we cannot space the pots easily, as they are jammed all together in the tray. Therefore, after a long hard summer of growing they may not be aesthetically pleasing. If you are aesthetically sensitive you may want to purchase a regular gallon pot at more money.

Trays	Botanical Name	Unit Price (per pot)
51	Achillea m. 'Summer Pastels'	\$3.00
58	Agastache m. 'Champagne'	\$3.75
159	Aster n. a. 'Purple Dome'	\$3.35
82	Bergenia c. 'Winterglut' (Winter Glow)	\$3.75
1431	Calamagrostis a. 'Karl Foerster'	\$4.10
72	Campanula g. 'Joan Elliott'	\$3.00
93	Campanula p. 'Takion Blue'	\$3.00
191	Coreopsis g. 'Baby Sun'	\$3.75
58	Coreopsis g. 'Domino'	\$3.75
93	Coreopsis g. 'Early Sunrise'	\$3.75
66	Coreopsis g. 'Presto'	\$3.75
64	Coreopsis v. 'Moonbeam'	\$3.75
80	Dianthus Scent First® Passion	\$5.20
161	Digitalis 'Carillon'	\$3.35
76	Digitalis 'Dalmation Purple'	\$3.35
318	Digitalis 'Foxy Hybrids'	\$3.35
52	Digitalis 'Sugar Plum'	\$3.35
98	Digitalis x. m. AGM 'Tetra'	\$3.35
252	Echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit'	\$3.00
84	Echinacea p. 'Bright Star'	\$3.00
151	Echinacea p. 'Doubledecker'	\$3.00
330	Echinacea p. 'Pow Wow White'	\$3.00
200	Echinacea p. 'Pow Wow Wild Berry'	\$3.00
133	Echinacea p. 'Prairie Splendor' (TM)	\$3.75
79	Echinacea p. 'White Swan'	\$3.00
71	Eupatorium r. 'Chocolate'	\$4.10
174	Geranium 'Johnson's Blue'	\$3.75
176	Geranium 'Rozanne' PP	\$5.90
150	Geranium s. 'Lancastriense'	\$3.75
169	Geranium s. 'Max Frei'	\$3.75
98	Hemerocallis 'Hyperion'	\$3.35
85	Hemerocallis 'Night Beacon'	\$3.35
85	Heuchera 'Blackout' PP	\$5.20
80	Heuchera m. 'Palace Purple'	\$3.00
109	Heuchera s. 'Chatterbox'	\$3.75
58	Heuchera s. 'Sioux Falls'	\$3.75
66	Heuchera v. 'Pistache' PP	\$5.20
62	Hosta 'Ann Kulpa'	\$5.20
138	Hosta 'Barbara Ann'	\$5.20
68	Hosta clausa	\$4.10
63	Hosta 'Dream Weaver'	\$5.90
209	Hosta 'Earth Angel'	\$5.20
286	Hosta 'Fragrant Blue'	\$5.90
58	Hosta 'Great Expectations'	\$5.90

Trays		
137	Hosta 'Guacamole'	\$4.10
215	Hosta 'June'	\$4.10
78	Hosta 'Lakeside Cupcake'	\$5.90
266	Hosta 'Minuteman'	\$5.20
275	Hosta 'Patriot'	\$4.10
125	Hosta 'Pilgrim'	\$5.20
95	Hosta 'Queen Josephine'	\$5.90
61	Hosta 'Rainforest Sunrise'	\$5.90
130	Hosta s. 'Elegans'	\$4.10
125	Hosta s. 'Frances Williams'	\$4.10
70	Hosta 'Saint Elmo's Fire'	\$5.90
196	Hosta 'So Sweet'	\$5.20
53	Hosta 'Twilight' PP	\$5.90
124	Hosta 'Whirlwind'	\$5.90
123	Hosta 'Winter Snow'	\$5.20
98	Iris s. 'Caesar's Brother'	\$3.75
71	Lavandula a. 'French Perfume'	\$4.10
307	Lavandula a. 'Hidcote'	\$3.00
382	Lavandula a. 'Munstead'	\$3.35
144	Lavandula 'Ellagance Pink'	\$4.10
70	Leucanthemum x s. 'Becky'	\$3.75
50	Leucanthemum x s. 'Snowcap'	\$3.75
96	Nepeta f. 'Kit Cat'	\$3.75
156	Nepeta f. 'Walker's Low'	\$3.00
80	Penstemon s. mexicali. 'Carillo Purple'	\$3.75
58	Rudbeckia 'Summerblaze'	\$3.00
350	Rudbeckia f. 'Goldsturm'	\$3.00
51	Salvia n. 'Blue Queen'	\$3.00
174	Salvia n. 'Caradonna'	\$3.00
109	Salvia n. 'East Friesland'	\$3.00
56	Salvia n. 'Marcus' PP	\$3.75
51	Salvia n. 'New Dimension Rose'	\$3.00
59	Salvia n. 'Snowhill'	\$3.00
68	Salvia x.superba 'Merleau White'	\$3.00
98	Sedum s. 'Autumn Joy'	\$3.00
95	Sedum s. 'Neon'	\$3.00
54	Sedum 'Vera Jameson'	\$3.00
75	Sisyrinchium a. 'Lucerne'	\$4.10
150	Stachys 'Hummelo'	\$4.10
91	Stokesia l. 'Blue Danube'	\$3.75
67	Verbena t. 'Homestead Purple'	\$3.00
180	Veronica Royal Candles (s. 'Glory' PP)	\$3.75
75	Veronica s. 'Icicle'	\$3.35

4 WINTER 2016

A few years ago the latest thing was rain gardens or flood over-flow ponds or something that involved water and mud. Therefore, we had a request for a large job once that used the following strange group of plants: *Glyceria aquatica variegata*, *Myosotis palustris*, and *Ranunculus repens*, with the common names being: sweet manna grass, water forget-me-not, and creeping buttercup. Optimist that I was, and still am, I made sure we had plenty of cutting stock and then waited. We still have plenty of cutting stock and are still waiting. Before ordering these plants and planting them be sure that you like them a lot because there will very shortly be a lot to like. I can no longer describe any plant as being invasive—that is a negative name with negative legal implications—so we are left with the words enthusiastic and strong, words not nearly as accurate as invasive.

While on the subject of plants that like to grow in the mud and will then grow over and through any nearby garden, there is *Spartina pectinata* 'aureomarginata' known as gold-edged prairie cord grass. There is a lot of that around here somewhere if anyone needs it. Anyhow, the *Myosotis* has the nicest blue bloom of anything for a few weeks in the spring. The only problem is that this is a weak-stemmed sprawling plant that does well in the landscape and at the edge of a shallow pond but is all scraggly looking and floppy when in a pot. Therefore it never sells at the garden center. Anyone interested in these plants will need to give us some lead time. We have lost that first flush of optimism and are not growing these plants on spec.

Because of the recent economy, or lack thereof, we had been growing for more the retail garden center type of market. Now with construction booming the landscape-type market is coming back. The product line is quite different for these two markets. Garden centers like plants that bloom with great gaudiness in April and May. When school gets out and the weather turns hot everyone goes to the beach and does not garden. The new business model that I am proposing for Twixwood is to let other nurseries grow the kinds of plants that sell to

the garden center trade. We will always have lots of pachysandra and ivy but not so many armerias or aquilegias or digitalises.

Landscapers, particularly the design-build people, get to design plantings that reflect a sense of ethics. Therefore, they are able to plant things that bloom in August and September such as: *caryopteris* and *hosta Royal Standard*. Or big plants for big landscapes such as *Persicaria polymorpha* and *Silphium perfoliatum* that look good from about a quarter of a mile away which brings up the subject of what we have lots of in the field that can be dug, potted up, and sold in just a few weeks.

I am thinking of *Trycirtis stolonifera* that blooms forever in late summer until frost with a light lavender bloom. The small flowers are thick on top the plants, about 2 ½' high. The other advantage of *trycirtis* flower is that individually the blooms are so ugly that if some were taped to the refrigerator door I would be a thin person. Another really good mass of color is *Persicaria Fire Tail* that has a bright red bloom going late into the fall until frost. The foliage is no prize but if one can plant something a foot or two tall in front of it we get a great splash of color. The garden center trade will never buy these plants because of the lack of an early spring bloom.

We will not be offering *Panicum vir.* 'Northwind' this year and the reason is because one of our more sophisticated customers has noticed that we do not have the true 'Northwind'. Whatever happened to our stock happened a few years ago when the previous management team was in place and I was happily retired. Therefore we cannot trace exactly what happened or whom is to fault. We think that some unscrupulous nursery person started growing 'Northwind' from its seed and not clonally from its clumps. We are beyond embarrassed that this happened to us, and more so, to our customers. We are going to get some starts from a reputable supplier and start over. In the meantime, we will try to get Roy Diblick to pay us a visit to look at our field stock and offer an opinion. We may have this plant from several batches of bought in liners with some being clonal and some from seed. In the meantime we will have a lot of reg-

ular *Panicum virgatum* for sale, the kind that grows from seed and that looks half-way like 'Northwind'.

Speaking of ethics, I am reminded of the big expensive software package that someone short on ethics sold us a few years ago; likewise when the previous management team was in place. I would mention the name except for fear of lawsuits, however, if anyone wants to know you can call us. The call will not take long as the answer is only three letters long; that is, unless the person on this end of the phone line puts a long line of colorful adjectives in front of those three letters.

We try to not think of how many hundred thousand dollars this software inventory and accounting package has cost us. It now takes three times as long to enter an order as it should and the accounting package part was unworkable. One of the upshots of this complex software is that our new sales personages were given a lengthy orientation into how the computer worked, thus having little time left to learn about plants. This became obvious to me a few weeks ago when a customer called inquiring about availability of *Vinca minor*. Fortunately the customer did not take no for an answer and after much discussion ordered some *Vinca minor* 'Bowles'.

That sales personage was amused to hear about *Vinca minor* and its existence and wondered aloud if there existed, therefore, *Vinca major*. She was taken aback by my explaining that there was *Vinca major*, but more so about my expressions of excitement that she did not know much about plants. I asked what the previous sales manager had done for orientation and training and was told that it was limited to getting the computer operation right. I am still recuperating from that tidbit of knowledge.

Vinca and ethics reminds me of one of my better ideas that was going to make the world a better place and have everyone love me. It started years ago with an excellent nursery tour of Holland organized by the late Aart de Wit of Grand Rapids. At Darthuizen Nursery we saw many varieties of *Vinca minor* and were informed that one of their selections; 'Dart's Blue' was an improved 'Bowles' (known as 'La Grave' over in England). The improvements had

to do with disease resistance to black stem rot as well as more or better blooms.

I purchased some, planted it out side by side with 'Bowles' that my parents had obtained from Spring Hill in the 1960's and watched it grow. One could notice enough difference in texture to see there was a difference, but not enough to describe. And so now we have a lot of 'Dart's Blue'. When we run out of 'Bowles' we inform the customer that we have 'Dart's Blue' and it is improved, and, amazing as it may seem, the customers are far too sophisticated to be duped into believing that anyone would offer them an improved plant over one they are sold out of, and for the same price. Therefore, we now ask the customer for feedback, is it ethical for us to substitute 'Dart's Blue' for 'Bowles'? I started out in this whole business hoping that everyone would love me and ended up in an ethical dilemma.

Vines are a strange line of plants. We have a tradition of growing a lot of clematis that we get from our very reliable and ethical supplier in Poland. These are carefully trellised and trimmed. Most of the other vines will be, likewise, trellised and trimmed. The exception to this careful work is *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* 'Englemannii'. This improved strain over the wild Virginia Creeper has a smaller and glossier leaf. Otherwise it has all of the same characteristics; five leaves, rapid climbing of any surface, and bright red fall color after frost. This plant does not make a good garden accent plant. It is used these days to cover miles of sound barrier walls planted along freeways. We always have 10,000 or more gallons on hand and can have lots more in case a big job comes along. Every few years lightning strikes and we sell a boat load. We would like to do this more often.

If a person reads all of the fine print in our price list/catalog, then I suggest therapy. If a person reads all of the fine print they will notice that we offer our groundcover in three entirely different pots in the same 32 pots or plugs to a tray, the same, nominally 10-20 tray, and for the exact same price. The pots are first the 2 1/2" SVD which is a plastic pot quite deep. Second is the Jiffy 2 1/2" peat pot which

is shorter. As a peat pot the roots grow out through the peat and after a year or two in the tray the pots disintegrate and the roots entangle. At least there is no root binding going on. Third is a sheet tray with 32 plugs molded into it. These go by the trade name Root Tutor™ and are made by Summit Plastic. Depending on how good your eyes are the plug is between 2" and 2 1/4" in diameter and it is a half inch deeper than the SVD. The plugs have little ridges or grooves in them to prevent root circling. We have no idea how well this works.

The theory is that the individual plastic pots, the SVD, is easier to sort and easier to sell at the retail level. Retail customers have a tendency to paw through a tray of peat pots searching for the bigger plants and leaving havoc in their wake. For the landscaper the SVD is not optimal as there are many pots to chase around the yard after planting. Peat pots are good for the ecologically sensitive. Just keep in mind their short shelf life as a discrete pot. Root Tutors™ are the best for landscapers as a worker can

easily carry four trays at a time and there are no little pots to blow around in the wind.

Needless to say the goal of being everything to everybody means that we are always out of some plants in some types of trays. This should not be a cause of heartbreak as other packages are the same price and pretty close to the same quality. The problem is more at our end because our sales personages have been carefully trained to look at their computers and then to believe what they see there. It appears that the sales people have not been trained in either plants or trays, and so for the last few years they have not mentioned to the customer that there are alternatives available if we run out of one kind of a package.

I plan on spending the winter carefully reviewing this information with the sales personages and will start doing that as soon as I can calm down enough to not stutter so much.



P. O. Box 247,
Berrien Springs, MI
49103