

# Plants for Wet Soils

Here is a sampling of some of the Spring Affair plants that can tolerate wet soil conditions.

## GRASSES & GRASS-LIKE PLANTS

*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Avalanche'  
*Carex buchananii*  
*Carex grayii*  
*Carex morrowii* 'Silver Sceptre'  
*Carex muskingumensis*  
*Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold'  
*Carex pensylvanica*  
*Equisetum hyemale*  
*Juncus effusus* 'Spiralis'  
*Juncus inflexus*  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberpfel'  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Cheyenne Sky'  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Dallas Blues'

## FERNS

*Athyrium x 'Ghost'*  
*Athyrium filix-femina*  
*Dryopteris erythrosora*  
*Dryopteris filix-mas* 'Linearis'  
 Polydactyla'

*Dryopteris filix-mas* undulate 'Robusta'  
*Dryopteris marginalis*  
*Matteuccia struthiopteris*  
*Osmunda regalis*

## SUN

*Asclepias incarnata* 'Cinderella'  
*Coreopsis rosea* 'Sweet Dream'  
*Eupatorium dubium* 'Little Joe'  
*Iris cristata*  
*Liatris aspera*  
*Liatris spicata* 'Floristan Violet'

## PART SHADE

*Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon'  
*Chelone lyonii* 'Hot Lips'  
*Filipendula rubra* 'Venusta'  
*Lobelia cardinalis*  
*Podophyllum peltatum*

## SHADE

*Arisaema triphyllum*  
*Astilbe chinensis* 'Visions in Pink'  
*Astilbe x japonica*

## WOODY

*Salix caprea* 'Weeping Sally'



Photo courtesy Eric Berg, Nebraska Forest Service

Eager plant buyers can register for the Preview Party.

# Spring Affair Kicks Off with Preview Party

Connie J. Paxton, Administrator  
 Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Inc.

Savvy gardeners know that Spring Affair is a big deal—our most attended event of the year—with thousands of plants to choose from and 4,000+ shoppers searching for the perfect plant for their homes and gardens.

Join us at the Lancaster Event Center (Pavilion I) for an evening of leisurely shopping ahead of the crowds while sampling hot hors d'oeuvres, bruschetta, antipasto platters, sinful mini-desserts, coffee, tea and a beer and wine cash bar while listening to great music.

While at the plant sale, visit educational displays that showcase the diversity of Nebraska's horticulture industry and emphasize sustainable landscape practices or enjoy perusing vendor booths.

Have questions about plants? Master Gardeners will be available to provide valuable knowledge about your plant selections as well as answer questions about existing plants or even pest problems in your landscape.

Reservations must be made by Friday, April 20, 2012. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$20 for members of the

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and support our educational mission to promote public knowledge and appreciation of plants, gardens and the environment. Tickets can also be purchased online at nsatickets.com or by calling the Arboretum Office at 402.472.2971.

Make plans now to join us and help usher in spring. We look forward to seeing you there and helping your garden grow!

## Spring Affair Preview Party

6-9 p.m. Friday, April 27

Be the first to get your hands on plants!

By reservation only with payment and form below.

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## Preview Party Reservation

Preview Party Reservations must be made by Friday, April 20.

- \_\_\_ Tickets @ \$25 each for Non-Members (join today and purchase tickets at discounted price!)
  - \_\_\_ Tickets @ \$20 each for Nebraska Statewide Arboretum members
  - \_\_\_ Total # of tickets
  - \_\_\_ (1) year Membership @ \$45 in the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.
  - \_\_\_ I would like to make a donation to benefit the Arboretum's programs and affiliate gardens.
- Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Payable to Nebraska Statewide Arboretum)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 NSA Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Mail check and reservation by April 20 to:

Spring Affair Tickets  
 Nebraska Statewide Arboretum  
 P. O. Box 830964  
 Lincoln, NE 68583-0964

Your ticket/s will be mailed to you.

Tickets can also be purchased online at nsatickets.com or by calling the NSA Office at 402/472-2971.

Questions? Call 402/472-2971 or email springaffair@unl.edu

**On Saturday, we open the plant sale to the public, so hurry out on Friday, April 27 for the best selection of plants.**

**Spring Affair is a great way to start the gardening season!**

# Plants to Get Your Hands on

Emily Levine  
Horticulturist



Palm sedge (top) can survive even under 3-4" of water; toad lily (below); seed pods of littleleaf pea shrub (top right).



*A toad lily in the Keim courtyard of UNL's East Campus is at eye level next to a hallway window. That's the sort of visibility the fascinating, intricate blooms of toad lily deserve.*

Emily Levine

"All hands on... plants." You might think that our theme this year refers to the fact that when you're lining up outside the Spring Affair doors, you can't wait to "get your hands on" all the plants we've got waiting for you. We're actually referring not just to the plants themselves, but to the special experience we know that gardeners get when interacting with plants: the actual planting, deadheading, cleaning up, watching them through the seasons—gaining an intimate knowledge of them. We recognize that there is something fulfilling in having plants in our lives in a close, tactile way. So, just what can you "get your hands on" this year?

Let's start with grasses and grass-like plants. We offer two new sedges this year, *Carex muskingumensis* and *Carex grayi*, neither of which is an easily overlooked diminutive little sedge. *C. muskingumensis*, palm sedge, grows 2-3' high and wide, adding structure and form to the landscape in addition to the traditional sedge attributes. This versatile plant, named as the 2011 GreatPlants® Grass of the Year, can take full or part sun, wet to dry soil and can thrive in rich loamy garden soil or heavy clay. Native to the prairie states to our east, palm sedge offers an exotic tropical look while also having the ability to withstand the cold winters of zone 4 and beyond. It makes a great pond or rain garden plant as it can even grow under 3-4" of water. Got a boggy spot? This might be a great solution.

*Carex grayi*, native to the eastern half of the country, likes plenty of moisture and, depending on how much it gets, can reach heights of 3' or more (if you're short on space, keeping it drier will limit its height). As with *C. muskingumensis*, Gray's sedge can take full sun to part shade and moist to wet soils. Its most noted feature is the wonderful seedheads which resemble the spiked balls of medieval weaponry; they look great in the garden and in dried arrangements as well.

We're offering a number of new and exciting true grasses this year. Our blue grama selection, 'Blonde Ambition', is a recent introduction from High Country Gardens chosen as a 2011 PlantSelect® winner. Like other *Bouteloua gracilis*, it's extremely drought-tolerant, needs full sun and adds a lovely, delicate texture to the garden. Of course, it also has those great "eyebrow" seedheads. 'Blonde Ambition' is a mutation of a *B. gracilis* 'Hatchite' plant found by High Country Gardens owner David Salman in a residential yard in Santa Fe. It is taller than the species (30-36") and its flowers are more chartreuse. If, like me, you love blue grama, this is a plant to try!

Another native with a great seedhead is *Elymus canadensis*, Canada wild-rye. Its 2-5' arching, swaying stems with huge curved seedheads add beautiful movement and texture into winter.

*Panicum virgatum* 'Cheyenne Sky' offers a nice, tight, vase-shaped clump, but the really exciting thing about this switchgrass is that its blue-green foliage turns wine red in early summer and by late summer the stems are topped with large, airy, burgundy flower panicles. Writing on an internet forum, one gardener raves, "There is a mature clump of this a block up from where I live. I call it a 'Car Wreck' plant, the kind you nearly swerve off the street or hit someone in front of you because you are so busy gaping at it. This one is in full, all day sun, a solitary plant and I yelled out 'Go back Go back' to my husband who was driving, so we had to circle around and check it out. It looked great as a single specimen and I cannot imagine it looking bad... Let me put it this way: I wish I had a spot for one. Simply gorgeous last fall. A perfect vase, tight and red with the sun shining through the reddish seedheads. Wow!" (Some nursery needs to hire that woman to write their plant blurbs.)

A recent introduction from the University of Minnesota, *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'MinnBlueA' ('Blue Heaven'™), is an exceptional addition to the little bluestem family. Selected by UM Horticulture professor Mary Meyer from a group of seedlings in a test field, 'MinnBlueA' is taller (40-48") with a more upright form than the species, yet tends not to flop like other bluestems can. In September, its blue-gray foliage takes on purple, blue, red, pink, burgundy and orange highlights that last into November. Few things are as stunning as the low autumnal sun lighting up a bunch of little bluestem from behind.

Don't forget the annual and temperennial grasses—great for the landscape or in containers. *Stipa arundinacea* (its newer botanical name is *Anemanthele lessoniana*), called pheasant's tail grass, New Zealand wind grass or needlegrass, is a finely-textured, cool season grass up to 3' in height that puts on a dazzling show of autumnal color—bronze, gold, orange.

Finally, I want to mention that Bluebird is now offering Ronald Strasko's Celebration Series of *Pennisetums*, including the 2012 introduction, 'Cherry Sparkler'. The first of these great plume grasses, 'Fireworks', a sport of *P. setaceum* 'Rubrum', was introduced in 2004. 'Fireworks' is a brilliant purple variegated plant with purple blooms, 24-30" tall. A culm sport of this original cultivar was introduced in 2009 as *Pennisetum setaceum* 'Sky Rocket'. It is the same height but is a green-white variegated grass with large smoky pink blooms. The newest one, 'Cherry Sparkler', is larger at 36-40" with pink-blushed green-cream variegation and huge arching burgundy plumes.

A few new herbs from Bluebird to mention: *Calamintha nepeta* 'Montrose White' is often grown just for its ornamental qualities but this plant—like a



mix of mint and oregano—is used in Italian cooking, especially dishes from the regions of Tuscany and Umbria. A foot and a half tall and wide, 'Montrose White' is a clump-forming, very fragrant plant, which is covered in white blossoms in the summer. It likes full sun and good drainage. It can take more clay soils if planted in raised beds or berms and its fragrance attracts pollinating insects. *Nursery Management* magazine writes, "When the Wisconsin Nursery Association decided to make *Calamintha nepeta* var. *nepeta* 'Montrose White' its 2010 Perennial Plant of the Year, they based the decision on years of experience with this stellar perennial. Mike Yanny of Johnson's Nursery in Menomonee Falls, Wis., is the man who named this plant after watching it thrive under benign neglect in his own garden. Yanny's wife purchased the calamint from Nancy Goodwin at Montrose Nursery. Yanny admired how the plant took a lot of abuse, but bounced back every year. He got the blessing from Goodwin to have the calamint named and patented—hence the cultivar name 'Montrose White'. Yanny calls it "tough, easy and absolutely beautiful."

*Origanum vulgare* 'Hot & Spicy', a recent introduction and new to Bluebird this year, is just what the name says. Growing 1 1/2' high and wide, it needs lots of sun and dry soil with good drainage—even sandy or rocky. Use it when you want an extra kick in Italian, Greek or Mexican cooking. Although 'Hot & Spicy' has showy flowers, keep the plant sheared to get new leaf growth for harvesting.

There are so many new ornamental perennials this year—new to Bluebird or new to Spring Affair—that it's impossible to choose what to write about. I think my strategy will be the equivalent of spinning a globe and seeing where my finger lands.

If you have the right conditions—full sun and very well-drained or even

"Plants to Get" continued on page 11

## UNL Gardens



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

unlgardens.unl.edu

A website devoted to the gardens of UNL's East Campus.

We are dedicated to the proposition that the living horticultural resources of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus are not only places to enjoy aesthetically, they are an invaluable educational tool, a place to reflect on life; they are an often overlooked jewel in the crown of Lincoln's greenspaces.

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- In-depth Plant Information
- Book Reviews
- East Campus Landscape History
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