

MORE FOR THE MID-ATLANTIC

SPECIAL MID-ATLANTIC SUPPLEMENT

March CHECKLIST

by Cynthia A. Brown,
Educational Horticulturist,
Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA

■ **BUDGET EXTENDERS:** Pot up stored tender bulbs: cannas, callas, colocasias, dahlias, and tuberous begonias. The bulbs should be retrieved from winter storage and potted up in a well-drained, soilless mix. Give them a head start in a sunny window; do not place in the garden until mid-June. If you haven't overwintered any tender bulbs, visit your local nursery to buy "naked" bulbs—they are a budget booster. A naked elephant ear purchased in March is a third of the cost of a potted one in June.

■ **BED PREPARATION:** If you have not had your soil tested in a while, send a sample to your local extension office. The test will tell you the current pH and which nutrients, if any, are lacking. Some plant nutrient deficiencies are caused by inappropriate pH levels, which lock the availability of soil nutrients. Adjusting the pH level with applications of sulphur or lime will release nutrients and help facilitate absorption. Nitrogen moves through the soil quickly;

Continued on A2

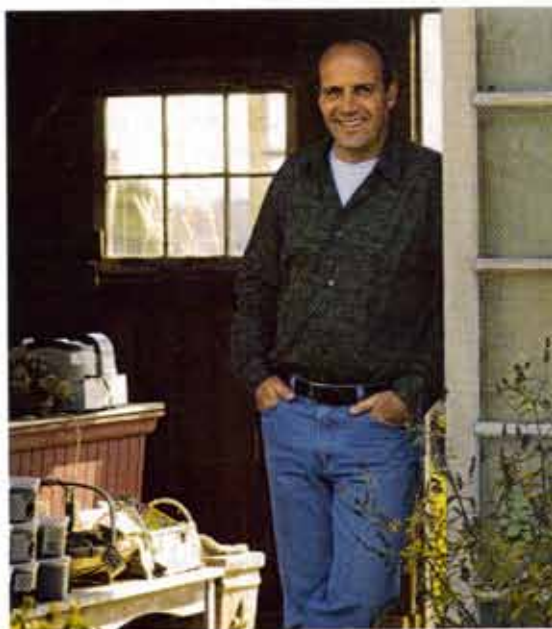
On the Road: PA

*Linden Hill's plant
rarities beckon*

LINDEN HILL GARDENS What could be better than a trip to your favorite plant-shopping haunt? Finding an exciting new source that immediately jumps to the top of your must-visit list—a place where new is the norm, and the unexpected is everywhere you look. Linden Hill Gardens in Ottsville, Pennsylvania, is just such a destination for gardeners on the hunt for the very latest and greatest new introductions.

Linden Hill Gardens is the creation of owner Jerry Fritz, who began his garden design business back in 1989 with just himself and one truck. An inveterate plant collector, Jerry eventually built up an extensive stock of exceptional plants to use in his design installations, and the business outgrew its original space. When Jerry Fritz Garden Design relocated to a 20-acre property in scenic northern Bucks County, Jerry took the opportunity to open Linden Hill Gardens, so he could make his special plant finds available to the public as well as to his clients.

While the nursery itself is fairly new—this marks its fourth year of operation—the collection of classic barns and outbuildings provides a tranquil country setting. Step through



Owner and garden designer Jerry Fritz in Linden Hill Gardens' "greeting barn."

the quaint "greeting barn" that adjoins the parking lot, and you'll enter a beautifully arranged sales area that could easily be a garden in its own right—except that the plants change dramatically from week to week, as the exuberant sales staff works its magic with whatever happens to be at the peak of perfection. Plants are grouped by similar growing needs or by particular traits, such as deer resistance.

For visitors who prefer a more straightforward shopping experience, there is an area where plants are arranged in A-Z order—a big help for collectors who prefer to start with a scan of their favorite genera. Other sales areas feature intriguing collections of specialty

March CHECKLIST

continued from A1

add sparingly and limit applications to areas with actively growing plants. Top-dressing beds with one to two inches of compost amends the soil and supplies perennials with trace nutrients, usually enough to keep perennials healthy and prevent rank growth. Beds composed of sandy soil and highly cultivated areas, such as vegetable gardens, annual beds, or containers, usually benefit from applications of organic fertilizers.

■ **NEATNESS COUNTS:** Clean out any remaining beds that have not been given attention. A clean bed will reduce the amount of diseases transferred to emerging perennials. Now is the time to cut a clean edge on the perimeter of your beds. It is easier to edge an "empty" bed and disperse the soil in place than to haul the extra soil to the compost pile. Be diligent in removing any remaining winter weeds—once they have gone to seed you have increased the seed bank and ensured yourself many more weeding hours.

■ **PRUNING CHORES:** Cut back all grasses and most perennials. Wait until after buds break and new growth begins before trimming dead stems out of shrubs such as *Salvia*, *Caryopteris*, *Calli-carpa*, *Perovskia*, *Lavandula*, *Rosmarinus* and *Buddleia*. Summer-blooming hydrangeas should show strong signs of life before a pruner ever touches a stem to remove winterkill. Now is the perfect time to thin congested shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous, to rejuvenate and shape.

■ **DIVIDE AND MULTIPLY:**
Spreading perennials such as asters,

continued on A4

On the Road: PA

(continued from page A1)

plants hand-picked by Jerry on his travels throughout the United States.

Linden Hill is open by chance during the week, and for Plant Event weekends held through the growing season. On these selected days, visitors are welcome to join Jerry on a guided Garden Walk or to roam the sales areas and display gardens on their own. In midsummer—July 30 and 31 this year—Linden Hill hosts a Perennial Extravaganza, with extended shopping hours, speakers, and an extensive offering of cutting-edge perennials from the country's top nurseries and

hybridizers. Plant fanatics often make the Perennial Extravaganza part of a whole-day expedition, combining it with a visit to nearby Parkside Orchid Nursery, which holds its annual Orchid Fest on the same weekend. For the complete schedule of Linden Hill's 2005 Plant Events, check out www.jerryfritzgardensdesign.com or call 610-847-1300. For more information on Parkside Orchid Nursery, visit www.parksideorchids.com or call 610-847-8039. — Nancy J. Ondra is a freelance writer who gardens in Bucks County, PA. She is co-author of *The Perennial Gardener's Design Primer with Stephanie Cohen* (Storey Publishing, 2005).

Unusual Suspects

Beyond glads and dahlias, there are a host of summer-flowering bulbs

Every year it happens again. Come the end of May, I shove yellowing daffodil leaves under the nearest perennial, pull out and discard any withering tulips (at least the ones the deer didn't eat), and wonder just what bulbs I will plant for summer interest. Garden centers offer a smattering of the familiar—cannas and dahlias, gladiolas and caladiums. These are good plants, but I want something different. Years ago, a paucity of unusual bulbs left me saying, "Is that all there is, just the usual suspects?" I started a search for new choices to enhance my summer garden. I didn't care if they were hardy. Because they bloom soon after they are planted, I can set them out at the same time as my tomatoes and expect a performance that same summer. Given the right site with the right drainage, some summer bulbs are hardier than they're given credit for. Even if they are not hardy, these bulbs are easy to store over the winter for replanting in the

spring. Now I look forward to warm weather, long nights, and the welcome return of bulbs that bloom beyond spring.

PINEAPPLE LILY

Pineapple lily, *Eucomis bicolor* (Zones 6–10), is an outstanding, easy-to-grow bulb from sub-tropical South Africa. Its glossy, straplike leaves form a rosette, from the center of which arises a purple-spotted scape. The upper portion of the 12- to 18-inch-tall stem is densely packed with small, starlike apple-green or greenish white flowers, each with a thin purple margin. *E. comosa* has purple-spotted leaves with green, purple and white, or all-purple flowers. This abundant mass of flowers is crowned with a small tuft of leaves resembling those atop a pineapple. Some of



Eucomis bicolor