

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich answers your growing concerns
Issue 7, September 20, 2008

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Tender perennials like this *Mandevilla* that bloom for many weeks win their way into a northern gardener's heart. Then at summer's end it's time to consider the options and practicalities and decide whether keeping them through winter is worth the work. Photo ©2008 Steven Nikkila



Purple fountain grass' tender ways leave northerners singing the blues

Judy has acquired a bunch of grasses labeled **tender fountain grass**. "I'm pretty sure that means annual. Is it worth trying to plant these in a sheltered area in **hopes of them coming back?** Or should we just enjoy them this year and compost? There was **no zone number** on the tag."

"I planted a copper sedge labeled 'annual' in a sheltered place" Judy reports, "and it has been growing beautifully for 3 years."



This is a single purple fountain grass growing as a perennial in my sister's zone 8 southern California garden. There, it attains a greater mass than it can in zone 5 since it can use the previous year's energy to increase its girth each spring. Sometimes I think I'd like to be able to grow it as a perennial. Then I realize buying it new each year in a manageable size isn't a bad deal, rather than dealing with it as yet another big grass determined to outgrow its bounds and needing division every few years.

I can't offer you much hope, Judy. Purple fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum') hails from dry regions of tropical Africa (Ethiopia, for instance) and southwest Asia. It won't survive temperatures below 10°F. That's hardiness **zone 8** -- Florida, Louisiana, the southern parts of Gulf Coast States, coastal South Carolina, the desert Southwest, much of California and western Washington and Oregon. Since it **isn't perennial in the majority of U.S. hardiness zones** and most plant tags are produced for whole-country use, it does often come labeled "tender."

If you're in zone 5 where winter's average minimum temperature may be -20°, it's a lot to ask for a garden spot where a zone 8 plant might survive. That extra 30 degrees might be available above a hot spring or next to a foundation wall that's cracked, not insulated and leaking lots of warm air.

The sedge may have been mislabeled or been new enough in the trade that its hardiness rating may have been a guess proved wrong. New species are being introduced to the U.S. garden market at quite a clip and many begin their run here with a hardiness rating that is an educated guess based on where experts have observed it growing. Purple fountain grass has been around long enough that its zone 8 rating isn't a guess but a well-tested guide.

*Copy and paste this URL into your browser to use a version of the hardiness zone map that allows zooming to the county level:
http://myvisionscape.com/resources/interactive_usda_zone_map

**I've described this in detail in past articles. If you're a long time reader and kept copies, look it up in my issues dated 11/13/04, 11/26/05 and 11/24/07. (I can't offer back issues yet -- what I have on hand are 16 years of separate text- and photo files that I must merge and format before I can share them.) If you're new and want to know more, email me your questions. I decide what to put in each newsletter based on relative frequency and timing of questions I've received over the years

Mmmm, Mandevilla I love you! Can I keep you through winter?

Sue says, "You recommended I put a **Mandevilla vine on my arbor**, Janet. You steered me away from perennial vines I asked about, saying they would only bloom for a few weeks then grow too big so that I'd have the extra work of pruning. I don't know whether I would have loved the wisteria, honeysuckle or trumpet vine but I do love this *mandevilla*. It's **bloomed all summer** with such dramatic big flowers! I'm hooked. **What do I do now?** Do I have to buy a new one next year or can I cut it back off the arbor, dig it up and keep it in the garage?"

Hi Sue, I'm glad the *Mandevilla* (also called *Dipladenia*) performed well on your arbor. You can cut it back and dig it up. After that, **choose from the options in "Take Your Pick,"** above.

Tactics for Wintering Tender Perennials

If it's unable to handle your region's cold you can:

- Bid it farewell in fall and **buy new in spring.**
- Pot it up for winter and move it into a very cool, well lit **conservatory.**
- Pot it up for winter and grow it on as a **houseplant with supplemental lighting.**
- Let it be knocked into dormancy by late fall's killing frosts, dig it before the ground freezes, then stash it in a place cool enough to **keep it dormant** but moist enough to prevent its crown from drying out. Walk-in coolers, root cellars, and dirt-floor and unheated basements are ideal. (Long standing advice to wrap dormant roots in paper and store them in basements doesn't work well or at all now that heated basements are the norm.)
- **Dig a pit** deeper than your region's frost line** -- three feet should do -- and bury the plant. Dig it up before the soil warms in spring.

The *Mandevilla* plants we grow are hybrids of zone 9 and zone 10 South American species, liable to be killed by a hard frost. So don't wait too long to bring it in. Find a place for it that doesn't drop below 40°F. Water it less often as days shorten and cool in fall and you can keep it nearly dry and mostly dormant through winter. Then clip it back next March and let it start fresh.



Mandevilla loves the heat and will stop producing flowers as the weather cools in fall. Water the vine less frequently then to nudge it into dormancy. Photo ©2008 Steven Nikkila

Gardener plays a plant name game, needs species name rules.

J.S. wants to solve a naming dilemma: When I purchase plants **I save the tags** in separate envelopes according to the planting bed I put the plant in. **I label my plants** based on what is on the tag. I made a drawing of each bed and I show where each plant is located.

I want to set up an inventory of all of the plants I have. I just do not know how to categorize the plants. **What is the difference between a genus and species?** For instance I planted a plant called *Echinacea purpurea* 'Fragrant Angel' PPAF, PVR, and I have another plant call Daisy, Shasta, Thomas Killen *Leucanthemum x superbum* Thomas Killen. In a book I have *Echinacea purpurea* is identified as the plant common name purple coneflower and Family: Asteraceae. **What is a family name?** What does the x mean in *Leucanthemum x superbum*? I do not know where to start. I would appreciate any suggestions you may have.



This (left) old fashioned bleeding heart's scientific name is *Dicentra spectabilis*. The genus name says it's related to other *Dicentras* such as fringed bleeding heart (*D.*

eximia). *Dicentra spectabilis*' second name, the species epithet, indicates it's outstanding in some way *in its genus*. Together the two words are called the species name. If we included the plant's family name on its label (in everyday usage, we don't do that) "Fumariaceae" would be the first word. Plants in a family are about as much alike as a person is to a chimp or gorilla -- all members of our Primate family.



This *Sedum* (right) is *S. spectabile*. That it shares a species epithet with old fashioned bleeding heart does not indicate relationship any more than sharing first names links me to other Janets or Janettes: Don't expect Macunovich, Janet to be much like Reno, Janet. Photo ©2008 Steven Nikkila

You're a budding taxonomist, J.S. -- a scientist who organizes living things. They use a system called binomial ("two name") nomenclature based on a global agreement forged in the 1700's to eliminate a proliferation of systems then in play. This happened largely because of the work of Carl Linnaeus, a great scientist who in brokering this accord proved himself an even greater statesman.

Each **species name has two-parts**. Part one is the plant's **genus**, the second is a **species epithet** or modifier.

Genus is capitalized. Usually, a **species epithet is written in lower case**. The plant we know by the common name purple coneflower is, scientifically, *Echinacea purpurea*.

Species in a genus are closely related. *Echinacea purpurea* is "**cousin**" to *E. pallida* (pale coneflower) and *E. paradoxa* (orange purple coneflower). Note that when we repeat a genus name in writing we can abbreviate.

Plants in the same genus may be able to exchange pollen. Seed from that union will yield a **hybrid** we may name by inserting **an x between genus and species epithet** of one parent's name. Recently, breeders have been using purple coneflower to pollinate its orange cousin. To speak the result, *E. x paradoxa*, say, "Echinacea cross paradoxa."

From our crosses and those that happen in the wild and garden we may choose to stabilize or reproduce **a desirable selection**. We may add a word to its name, so then it **is a "variety"** or "cultivar" (cultivated variety). Cultivar or variety names are written in plain text and single quotes. *Echinacea p.* 'Fragrant Angel' is a variety of *E. purpurea*. A cross or hybrid may breed true or its seedlings may show wide variation.

I would **alphabetize a plant inventory by genus name** and then species epithet, as I put Macunovich, Peggy before Macunovich, Rick in my address book. I'd create a computer spreadsheet with genus in column A, species epithet in column B, subspecies and/or variety in C and family name in D so that I could sort by family or genus and keep separate record of the dozens of daylilies and phloxes and sedums I grow.

Some plants are labeled with **abbreviations regarding their resistance to common pests** of that species. Tomatoes tagged VFNT resist verticillium wilt, fusarium fungus, nematode infestation and tobacco mosaic virus.

The rest of what you ask goes into an arena I try to ignore. PPAF is Plant Patent Applied For. PVR can mean Plant Variety Rights. It may take someone of Linnaean stature to sort out the tangled created by modern plant patents and trademarks.

Family, Genus and species apply to Animal and Plant Kingdoms

	In animals , in common terms :	Same animals , by scientific name :	In plants , in common terms	Same plants , by scientific name :
Genera (plural of genus) in a Family	Dog family includes wolf (such as gray wolf) and fox (gray fox)	Family Canidae includes <i>Canis</i> (such as <i>C. lupus</i>) & <i>Urocyon</i> (<i>U. cinereoargenteus</i>)	Mustard family includes Coles such as mustard greens and candy tufts such as evergreen perennial candytuft	Cruciferae (with 4-petal, cross-like flowers) includes <i>Brassica</i> such as <i>B. juncea</i> and <i>Iberis</i> such as <i>I. sempervirens</i>
Different species in the same Genus	Gray wolf and coyote	<i>Canis lupus</i> and <i>C. latrans</i>	Wild cabbage and rape seed	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> and <i>B. napus</i>
Varieties within a species (these earn latinized variety names if they persist naturally -- a subspecies)	Red fox with near-black fur tipped white, and red fox with yellowish red underfur	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i> ' Silver Fox ' and <i>V. vulpes</i> ' Sampson ' propagated on fur farms	Flowering kale and broccoli	<i>B. oleracea acephala</i> and <i>B. oleracea botrytis</i>
Varieties within a subspecies	Lab and dachshund	<i>Canis lupus familiaris</i> ' Labrador Retriever ' and <i>C. lupus familiaris</i> ' Dachshund '	dwarf Brussels sprouts and old fashioned English Brussels sprouts	<i>Brassica oleracea gemmifera</i> ' Catskill ' and <i>B. oleracea gemmifera</i> ' Evesham Special '

More things a gardener should know about scientific names of plants:

They reduce confusion. One plant may have many common names. To be clear, use its one, universal scientific name when you discuss it.

Look up a plant by its scientific name. Many plant encyclopedias and catalogs are organized alphabetically by genus and then species name, *Leucanthemum nipponicum* before *L. x superbum* before *Mentha piperita* (spearmint). That's practical for most everyday use. Some texts are organized by family -- more useful to taxonomists. Most have a common name index to direct you to the plant's listing.

In all publications from Arabic to Zulu, a plant's name appears in binomial form and in Roman characters.

We don't usually say the family name. Related genera (the plural of genus) are called a family. They share some traits. A family is named for one of its genera -- Asteraceae is the aster family.

Primary thing plant relatives share: Sex. Members of a genus might look alike, or not. The crux of their relationship is reproductive parts. A single genus may include trees, shrubs and vines or a mix of annual, perennial, deciduous and evergreen plants. Whatever the mix, they have similar seed-producing parts so relatives' flowers may be similar.

To learn the family, open a dictionary or encyclopedia to a genus name. Its description there will include a family name.

To learn which plants are in a family: Family names are often

included in encyclopedias. Read here about traits common to family members and see a listing of all genera in that family.

More sharing, of pests and pollinators. Members of a plant family may appeal to the same pollinators. They are more likely than unrelated plants to be susceptible to each others' diseases and host each others' insects.

Scientific names sometimes change. The names are overall pretty stable but there are always going to be changes. It's the job of a taxonomist to create new plant names or discover reasons to reclassify and rename existing species. Super microscopes that see into a plant's DNA increase change, as do political changes that enabled formerly isolated scientists to attend meetings, recognize cases of duplicate names and start sorting them out according to who published first about the plant.

Name change examples. The experts still haven't agreed but may put *Sedum spectabile* into a new genus, *Hylotelephium*. And recently enough that it still causes arguments the name *Chrysanthemum* was taken away from the garden mum. It was then restored by exception.

We get reminders of a name change for decades. The International Botanical Congress meets regularly to work out differences. We receive the results in changes in our books and catalogs, which list both old and new name for decades, such as "*Sedum spectabile* (syn., *Hylotelephium spectabile*)" where syn. means "synonymous with."

Scientific names are not "Latin" or "Greek." Scientists simply agreed to base them on Latin and Greek spelling, gender agreement, etc. It is foolish to say *Buddleia* (butterfly bush) or *Forsythia* are Latin genera when they honor modern men named Buddle and Forsythe. Likewise,

the species epithet in *Lilium Michigananense* might be Greek to a Roman.

The benefit of knowing scientific name. Look for patterns to improve your understanding and use of scientific names. Genus and family names alert us to plant relationships. Species epithets often tell visual, sensual, practical or geographical facts. *Acer rubrum*, a maple and *Actaea rubra*, a wildflower called baneberry, share a species epithet -- one for its red fall hue and the other for its red berries. *Picea pungens* is the spruce whose needles have a pungent smell. The name *Ficus elastica*, rubber tree, proclaims its use while *Aster novae-angliae* refers to the native range of the New England aster.

It's a subspecies if it has a variation that persists naturally. If a variation within a species occurs naturally and those individuals breed relatively true to type, they may be classified as a subspecies. The species Colorado spruce, *Picea pungens*, often produces blue foliage seedlings, which are called *P. pungens glauca*, Colorado blue spruce. Varieties can come from subspecies -- globe blue spruce is *P. pungens glauca* 'Globosa'.

Species we've worked with longest have long names. The longer cultivation goes on, the more varieties and longer names there may be. *Canis lupus familiaris* is the domestic dog, a subspecies of the wolf. Within *C. l. familiaris* there are hundreds of cultivars we call breeds selected for size, coat color, scenting ability, etc. Despite their differences a dachshund and Great Dane are the same species. Plants that have been closely cultivated for millenia, such as Japanese maple have as much variety now, from dwarf weeping red laceleaf maples to upright tricolor types.

Expert Gardener Afield: Report from Sweden

The world is full of great gardens and even the widest ranging traveler can't see them all. Here's a chance to **peek through expert eyes** at those we can't reach on our own.

Dear Janet,

Pierre and I just returned from Sweden where we attended the International Hardy Plant Union (ISU) Congress. The ISU is an organization of professionals involved in the perennial plant industry. There are 17 European countries represented as well as the U.S., Canada and Argentina. The ISU Congress meets every two years for five days in a different European country to further One of its most important goals, to co-ordinate perennial plant evaluation on an international level, exchange information and perennial evaluation results. Activities range from visiting botanical gardens, private gardens and research facilities to touring nurseries and growing facilities as well as unique places of botanic interest. On one night an auction is held and members are encouraged to bring plants or items to sell. It was at the 1998 ISU auction that a great new ajuga was found by Mary Walters of Walters Garden, Pierre Bennerup of Sunny Border Nurseries and Dan Heims of Terra Nova Nursery. Thus Ajuga 'Chocolate Chip' found its way to the American market.

Highlights of our trip:

- A visit to Save Plantskola, one of the largest perennial nurseries in Sweden.
- A guided tour of the Gardens of Gothenburg, an international exhibition where designers and landscape architects turn their interpretation of a themed garden into reality.
- A trip to the Gothenburg Botanical Garden where their rock garden included waterfalls and ponds all planted with accurate plantings.
- A most unusual treat was a visit to a private botanical garden created by a young plant enthusiast Peter Korn. He has managed to clear ten acres of rolling timbered hills punctuated with huge boulders and bogs and turned it into a most impressive collection of alpines and rare plants. Many of the plants he brought back from worldwide travel and propagated so they grow in his garden and are also for sale.

In addition, Pierre and I managed to squeeze in a trip to the Carl Linne garden. An interesting fact: Carl Linne', the Father of Taxonomy, changed his name to Carolus Linnaeus, latinizing his own name as he had been doing in the plant kingdom. Here's a picture of Pierre and me in front of his home.



By the way, check out the roof of the Linne home which shows the humble beginnings of what is now recognized as an excellent environmental sustainability factor, The Green Roof.

Cheers! Cheryl Bennerup

Cheryl Bennerup is a grower extraordinaire who impressed me with the perennials she produced at Cheryl's Gardens in Milford, Michigan, thrilled me with reports from the Netherlands as she finished a horticulture degree, reinforced my first impressions with her work as grower at Bordine's in Clarkston, Michigan, and now has the enormous job of keeping on top of all potential plant problems at Sunny Border Nursery in Connecticut.

Correction

Chicago Botanic Garden's Sedum Evaluation Delayed

Last week I told you the evaluation of perennial *Sedum* was coming soon from the excellent Plant Evaluation program run by Richard Hawke at Chicago Botanic Gardens. This week, I learned from Richard that construction of the Gardens' new Science Center near the Trial Gardens has had an unexpected impact. A pipe had to be trenched clear through the trial beds! Many trials have to begin again. Hawke's perspective is, "We'll remake the whole area once construction is done. We gain more than we lose -- the trial garden will literally be the new building's entry and there will be a bridge connecting this area to Evening Island. Many more people will see the trials. Plus, at this point with so many years' experience with plant evaluations, I know just what changes to make in a re-do, to improve the whole process."

Even without *Sedum*, there are evaluations of 30 plant groups already available from Chicago Botanic Garden's site. It's a great resource.*

* For more, paste this URL into your browser: http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/plant_evaluation/index.php#notes

This week in Janet's garden

Grow with me! this week I will:

Take no prisoners as I weed. Getting ahead of weeds in fall does more for a garden's appearance and a gardener's time next year than anything else we can do. I chase every weed root, clean up every edge and mulch every bare space.

Enjoy the seedy mess in my own yard. It may look disreputable but it's alive with birds. My particular favorites are the American goldfinch youngsters, just fledged and still trailing their harried parents, clamoring to be fed even as they figure out how to pluck seeds from sunflowers, cosmos and a dozen other species, including weeds.

Cut down what has finished contributing. As my husband the photographer is fond of saying, "If it doesn't *add* to the picture, it's detracting." I leave fresh and complementary greenery around the toad lily, Japanese wax bell, butterfly bush, turtlehead, purple bush clover, aster and Japanese anemone still in bloom but I chop down tattered hostas, spotty peonies, spent blackeye Susans and much more, including perfectly good plants that just happen to be in places no longer seen daily by viewers who are pulling back to fall vantage points.

This is not plant abuse. There will be no casualties. Frost can cut a plant down, right now -- it's happening already up in zones 3 and 4 -- and that plant will still be back in fine form next spring. Their season has been long enough. That we do the cutting rather than Ma Nature makes no difference.

Wrap-up with Grins and Grow-ans that turn our green thumbs up or down

Grins: To the gardener's sunny perspective, as illustrated by two messages I received recently. Germanator says she, like me, loses pruners and other tools in the garden, gives up, replaces them and then has the originals turn up. Yet it's okay because, "you now have an extra set of

pruners for helpers to use in your yard." Meanwhile, Joe didn't even take a breath between lamenting his garden's total brown-out from summer drought and observing, "The good news, I haven't mowed my grass in two months."

Grow-ans: To being stuck indoors on glorious fall days. If you can escape for even an hour, do it. Ancient religions described the life forces that flowed up to the sky in spring and returned to the earth in fall. I believe there's something to that. Get out there in line with that energy, absorb it and see what I mean.

Who's Janet?

Someone more interested in the process of gardening than its products. Janet Macunovich began gardening for others when she ran out of places to make new gardens at her own home. After 25 years of attending classes, interviewing other professionals and experts, accumulating thousands of hours of research to write books and articles, and non-stop practical application she says, "Every garden is unique and every plant behaves differently in each place I put it. In a lifetime I won't be able to see all the combinations and possibilities but I intend to keep trying. What a privilege, to be able to work for others so that 'my' gardens and experience stretch across many counties and States. In addition, I have the joy of stepping into and learning from hundreds of other situations every year by helping students and readers who ask my advice." Email questions to her at JMaxGarden@aol.com.

To learn more, email JMaxGarden@aol.com and ask for What's Coming Up, Issue #1.

Places to catch Janet in-person:

Saturday, September 27, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., "Holiday Decorations from Your Garden." A hands-on workshop sponsored by the Alpine Master Gardeners and the Michigan State University Extension. At the Livingston Township Hall in Gaylord, Michigan. \$30. For more information, contact Amanda at 989-983-4401, spiderwebranch@peoplepc.com.

Tuesday, September 30, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m., "Flower Gardening." This segment of the Wayne County Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener training is presented by Janet at the Extension facility on Venoy Road in Wayne, Michigan. It's open to current students and also alumni of the program. Contact your Master Gardener Coordinator for details.

Saturday, October 4, 2008, "Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Conference." A whole day and a great line-up of topics, including Janet's descriptions of "Cutting back the rambunctious garden," "Doubling Up Perennials" and "The Collector: Engaging harmony from intriguing diversity," and "Mixed Borders." In Warren, Ohio at Kent State University, Trumbull campus. Open to Ohio State Master Gardeners and friends. For a description of the conference and registration information, check the website* or call Steve Hudkins at the OSU Extension (330-637-3530).

*Paste www.ohiomastergardener.com to your browser bar.

Thursday, October 9, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m., "Garden by Janet - Bring your gloves and tools!" At a Farmington Hills garden, we're dividing perennials. Come learn a thing or two, try your hand at splitting the species you've hesitated to tackle, and bring your own divisions to share if you

like. Free to my newsletter readers. Email or call Janet (JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850) for details and to reserve a spot in this limited-space workshop.

Saturday, October 18, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., "**Cutting Back the Rambunctious Garden.**" A hands-on workshop sponsored by the Detroit Garden Center. Learn to prune shrubs, trees and perennials that want to outgrow your garden. At the Nature Zoo on Belle Isle in Detroit, Michigan. \$35. For more information, call the Detroit Garden Center at 313-259-6363 or email detroitgardenctr@yahoo.com.

Tuesday, October 21, 9:00 a.m. to noon, "**It's big but we can move it**" We've got a number of shrubs and dwarf conifers to move at a garden in Franklin, Michigan. Come see and hear how. Free to my newsletter readers. Email or call Janet (JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850) for details and to reserve a spot in this limited-space workshop.

Saturday, November 1, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., "**Redesigning the garden's bones.**" I'm taking a look at how to improve the structure of a garden in Troy, Michigan. You can come see how this kind of design work is done during the very best season to see, evaluate and plan changes to the "bones." Free to my newsletter readers. Email or call Janet (JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850) for details and to reserve a spot in this limited-space workshop.

About attending Gardens by Janet sessions:

We gardeners are let-me-see, hands-on people and that's how we learn best. In these sessions, I offer you that kind of chance to grow. You can visit me where I'm working and you can either watch or work with me side by side. I hope you'll bring your gloves and join in so you realize the most value for the time.

At the **gardens I tend through my business, Perennial Favorites:** I've worked for many years with some of my clients, who not only trust me with their landscapes but also understand my enthusiasm for teaching. They open their gardens to small groups who want to see and practice "how to." When the work I'm scheduled to do may be of interest to you and the situation allows on-lookers or apprentices, I invite you in.

I've volunteered in the **Detroit Zoo Adopt-A-Garden** program for 20 years. During that time more than 100 people have worked with me, some for a day and others for years. We have fun, we learn, we accomplish much. The program requires that regular garden volunteers complete an interview and orientation process but you can try it for a time or two on a temporary pass as my student. **If you'd like to join me at the Detroit Zoo**, email mstgarden@yahoo.com. Make the subject line of your email "I'll help at the zoo with Janet." That email will put you in touch with my good friend Deb Tosch who keeps my group's schedule straight while I plan and lead the work. You'll receive upcoming work dates and instructions for getting to the zoo and meeting up with my group.

Watch this space to join me in other non-profit gardening events and in gardens I design and tend.