

First Thursdays in the Soest Garden
Lynne Thompson
May 5th, 2005

Ten Great Plants for Spring

1. *Polygonatum odoratum 'Variegatum'* - In Bed 1, #20

Variegated Solomon's Seal

18-36" x 24-30" - Shade / pt. shade, Soil: rich, moist well-drained. Uses: border and woodland gardens.
Blooms: April-May.

Graceful, arching stems, leaves are narrowly edged in creamy white. Delicate creamy bell flowers hang from the stems usually followed by black berries. Established clumps can be divided in the fall - cut the rhizomes into sections, each with at least a couple of stems. *Great Plant Pick*

2. *Pulmonaria saccharata 'Roy Davidson'* - In Bed 2, #30 and Bed 3, #29

Lungwort

16"x24" - Shade / pt. shade, Soil: rich, moist well-drained. Uses: edging, woodland borders.

Blooms: Mid February- May.

Periwinkle blue flowers stand six to eight inches above narrow green and silver foliage. Works well as a ground cover and blooms for an exceptionally long time. Cut the plants back hard immediately after blooming to rejuvenate the leaves and create healthier clumps. Evergreen in mild winters.

3. *Heuchera* and *Heucherellas* (Throughout the Soest Garden and other CUH gardens)

Coral Bells and Foamy Bells

1-2'x12-18" - Sun / shade (better NOT in hot afternoon sun). Soil: Rich to average. Uses: borders, edging, specimen, containers. Blooms: April-July.

One of the most widely used groups of perennials for their outstanding foliage in shades of purple, brown, red, near black, silver, chartreuse, amber, the list goes on and on.

Cut woody stems back hard (2-3") in early spring to rejuvenate. Easy to take cuttings and propagate.

(I've asked the Miller Library to order a new book titled: *Heuchera and Heucherellas: Coral Bells and Foamy Bells* by Dan Heims and Grahame Ware. Publisher Timber Press, May 2005

4. *Rheum palmatum tanguticum* - In Bed 5, #64

Ornamental Rhubarb

3-6' x 3' - Sun / pt. shade, Soil: Rich, moist. Uses: Specimen plant, borders, waterside.

Blooms May-June.

Impressive specimen plant for moist sites. Large rhubarb-like leaves are deeply lobed with pointy edges. In spring the leaves are beautifully tinged bronzy-red later fading to green. Spikes of white to reddish-pink flowers appear in early summer on tall stems.

5. *Cynara cardunculus* - In Bed 6, #88

Cardoon

3-6' x 3' - Sun, Soil: Average well drained. Uses: Specimen plant, borders or large containers.

Blooms: August-October.

An old victorian favorite once grown as a vegetable is back again and valued for its dramatic size and silver/white foliage. In summer, tall flower stems are topped by fat thistle buds which resemble small globe artichokes (a close cousin). The buds open into large purple thistles that attract bees and can be left for winter interest in the garden.

6. *Geranium renardii* - In the South Slope, #61

Hardy Geranium

10-12" x 18" - Sun, Soil: average, moist well-drained. Uses: Excellent as a ground cover, and in borders. Blooms: May-September.

The distinctive foliage of this geranium is grayish green with scalloped edges and a lovely velvet-like texture. In addition to the fabulous foliage it has clusters of pale lilac flowers with deep purple venation. Very pretty plant that the Royal Horticulture Society has awarded its prestigious Award of Garden Merit (AGM). Plant it in a place where it can be touched and looked at close-up.

7. *Saxifraga x urbium 'Aureopunctata'* - In Bed 6, #65

Golden London Pride

8-12" x 6-12" - Part sun, Soil: Average to moist, well-drained. Uses: Edging, rock gardens, containers. Blooms: April-June

Vigorous habit (but controllable!), spreading into low evergreen mats of leathery rosettes that are spotted with gold. Short stems of airy pink flowers appear in spring. Tuck them in here, there and everywhere.

8. *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* - In Bed 7, #8

Columbine Meadow-rue

2-3' x 18-24" - Pt Sun, Soil: Prefers a rich, moist soil. Uses: Borders, woodland gardens.

Blooms: May-July

Lacy foliage similar to a Columbine or Maidenhair Fern but sturdier. Very delicate flowers are held in a large, open spray. Tougher than it appears.

9. *Styrax obassia* - In Bed 7 and the South Slope, #T1

Fragrant Snowbell (tree)

10 ft tall x 8 ft crown at ten years, at maturity reaching 30-40' tall. Full sun to part shade. Soil: average well drained. Uses: plant in groves or as a single focal point. Blooms: May-June.

Grown for its fragrant white flowers and bold textured foliage. Fall color is pale yellow. *Great Plant Pick*

10. *Viburnum plicatum f. tomentosum 'Mariesii'* - In the South Slope, #T3

Doublefile Viburnum

10' x 12' - Full sun to part shade. Soil: Average to moist, well-drained. Uses: In the border or as a focal point. Blooms: April-May

Not just beautiful in spring this is a fabulous four season plant! Doublefile Viburnum develops a branching pattern with strong horizontal layers as it matures creating an interesting winter framework. In spring its branches are covered with flat sprays of white flowers, later in summer clusters of red berries rest where the flowers once stood. In fall it colors up beautifully. Prune thoughtfully to maintain the layered structure.

Great Plant Pick