

Perennial Maintenance for Beginners – Part I

continued from page 1

Perennials, on the other hand, get planted and live in their bed forever, dying back to ground in the winter and returning in the spring. But they usually bloom for a short period of time, short meaning a month or two. The number of satisfactory flowering annuals seems pretty limited, but the number of perennials is almost infinite, making perennial bed gardening more “challenging” (a term all gardeners know, is code for “difficult and rewarding”). Annuals are, in the great unspoken horticultural hierarchy, a lesser class of plants than perennials. They had almost dropped off the list of desirable plants when the “coleus and New Zealand flax” revolution blew the lid off



Annual and Perennial

of planting in pots. We are having fun in pots once again, impressing each other with wild and wonderful combinations that last all season long.

Maintaining perennial beds

But back to your perennial bed. First you need to know that when you see that magazine photo or visit that garden—all glorious in its abundance of foliage and flowers—you are seeing it at its peak. For half of the year, our winter, it’s mostly gone! And behind the scenes is an incredible amount of work—staking, grooming, relocation, staking, division, weeding, baiting, grooming, cutting back and staking. Did I mention staking? But making and tending perennial beds is, after all, a horticultural addiction of the highest order.

And if you came back to that same garden three years later you would see something wholly different. I often tell people that making a garden is more like riding a horse than building a table. Gardens keep moving and changing as the plants grow up. It’s an ongoing process, not something to be finished. Beds get larger, some plants get shaded out, and the garden must be weeded, mulched and adjusted regularly. Perennial bed maintenance is more like riding wild horses,

continued on page 3

PlantAmnesty

PO Box 15377, Seattle, WA 98115-0377
(206) 783-9813 (206) 529-8023 (fax)
www.plantamnesty.org
E-mail: info@plantamnesty.org

Mission Statement

To end the senseless torture and mutilation of trees and shrubs caused by mal-pruning (and other common forms of plant mis-management).

Goals:

1. Raise awareness of the problem.
2. Provide solutions (referral service, education, volunteer pruning and care), and ensure they are readily accessible to the public and green industry professionals.
3. Engender respect for plants.

We Affirm:

- That our organization is inclusive, tolerant, and based on grassroots collective action.
- That our educational materials are clear, current and technically accurate.
- That we will maintain a sense of humor and goodwill while being outspoken on the issues.

Staff

General Manager Charlotte Moss
Referral Service Coordinator Fran Bry
Events & Referrals Assistant. Sherry Perrine
Office Administrator Joyce Lane

Officers and Board Members

President Cass Turnbull
Vice President Marlis Korber
Secretary. Rose Brittenham
Treasurer Mike Ewanciw

Lacia Lynne Bailey, Diedre Muns, Marianna Clark,
and Jamie Roulette.

Newsletter Contributors

Editorial Committee Marsha Hicks, Joyce Lane & Cass Turnbull
Desktop Publishing Spin Digital - www.spindi.com
Circulation/Membership Contributors Joyce Lane, Sherry Perrine, Cass Turnbull
Photographers Many and Various
Illustrations/Artwork Kate Allen
Printing & Distribution Consolidated Press

Please mail us articles, short jokes, artwork, tales, Adopt-A-Plant and Eco-Exchange information. The newsletter is a benefit of membership.