

## The Fall Ephemerals

You hear the term “spring ephemerals” for those early fleeting bulb blooms that seem to vanish in the passing of a spring storm. It does seem that our long awaited fall flowering bulbs are equally fleeting. *Lycoris radiata*, a member of the amaryllis family, which has as many common names as a cat has lives, is listed as an autumn bloom but pops up in the heat of late summer and wilts. Enjoy its vivid red eye-catching beauty quickly!

I have heard it called British soldier, naked lady, resurrection lily, surprise lily, hurricane lily, spider lily. It has strap-like leaves but they are long gone when the flowering stalk emerges. *L. radiata* is the one we have briefly now: *L. aurea*, the golden spider lily, blooms from spring to summer and *L. squamigera*, the Resurrection lily, whose rose-red flowers are veined blue or purple, blooms in summer. ‘Naked lady’ is a misnomer actually as that name belongs to the *Amaryllis belladonna*, AKA magic lily, resurrection lily. None of them, you may notice, belong to the lily family!

The Amaryllis bloom is not spidery but has funnel shaped pink fragrant flowers on a stem that also emerges after the leaves have died down. They are all wonderful and worth planting here. The bulbs are poisonous so they defeat critters and they are hardy in our zone 7 even though they are technically hardy to zone 8.

## The Fall Standbys

When you rub the foliage of a chrysanthemum the fragrance is a promise of cooler, crisper weather. Weather – is it unusually inconsistent this year? Things seem to be earlier or later than in other years, but I know I have watered very little so the single daisy chrysanthemum ‘Mary Stoker’ is just beginning to bud and in other years it has been blooming by early September.

The small chrysanthemum with the silver edged leaves shows no buds but I may have missed it. It is low growing with tiny yellow button flowers- a daisy without the white rays. It provides a ground cover for a hot dry slope so the buttons are a bonus.

Asters are beginning, not as healthy as in other years but somehow ‘stuff’ has gotten in the way of the TLC every garden needs. What has survived despite drought, neglect, and heat are: gaura, cut back once or twice to rebloom and they do look like twirling butterflies in the slightest breeze; obedient plant ( *physostegia virginiana*) weedy, wild, welcome; and phlox, rudbeckia, and ‘Knock Out’, bless their tireless hearts.

## Magic Tree

I admit to a profound skepticism toward any product guaranteed to make us rich, young, or beautiful. However, I am profoundly optimistic that solutions can be found to the problem of world hunger if we can just get the greed-heads out of the way. It was a pleasant surprise to read that a small tropical tree, the Moringa, is capable of feeding

people. It has been known for centuries in India as a 'drumstick' tree because its skinny seed pods resemble small sticks. When these pods are young and tender they are served as a vegetable. The leaves, composed of many leaflets, are also edible and ounce for ounce contain more beta carotene than carrots, more calcium than milk, more iron than spinach, more vitamin C than oranges and more potassium than bananas.

Species of Moringa are native not just to India but to small areas in Asia and Africa, affording hope of further use. One reason scientists concerned with hunger issues are studying this tree is that, unlike protein-rich soybeans and other legumes, this tree survives on poor soil in dry climates. For the past decade, development officials and the Red Cross have been promoting to good effect a dietary supplement made from the leaves of the Moringa in treating malnutrition. Studies are underway to validate the anecdotal evidence.

### **Cabbages & Kings**

This column has a garden/environmental focus but I must deviate to declare that Gloucester County has done one thing gloriously right! The hanging baskets that dress the Main Street light poles are a delight. Not only are they planted with a dazzling variety of color and texture, they have also maintained a phenomenal freshness through these past hot dry weeks. Other facets of our civic culture may evidence our human frailty but are not those gardens on a pole proof of perfectibility?