

Let's Try It....

I've always enjoyed exploring each year's Perennial Plant Association Plant of the Year, and, as usual, they have chosen an interesting winner for 2010.

The *Baptisia australis* is more commonly known as blue false indigo, and it's one that I am going to plant this year in my backyard flower garden. It grows

3-4 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide and is an adaptable native species which survives in hardiness zones 3-9.

Baptisia australis blooms violet-blue flowers for three to four weeks in the spring followed by production of charcoal black seed pods. In early American years, it was used to produce indigo dye. It is a legume, related to alfalfa and soybeans, and it contains several alkaloids which give it a bitter taste and make it undesirable to browsing deer. *Baptisia* has no serious disease or pest problems.



Here are a few more of the basics about the 2010 Perennial Plant of the Year:

- Light - Plants thrive in full sun. Plants grown in partial shade may require staking.
- Soil - This North American native is easily grown in well-drained soil and is drought tolerant after establishment.
- Uses - This spring flowering shrub-like perennial may be used to fill the back of the border or in the wild garden.

Unique Qualities - The combination of flower and leaf color is dramatic in the early blooming season. Flowers are followed by inflated seed pods that are useful for dried flower arrangements.

(Taken from the PPA website)

Go to the Perennial Plant Association's website (www.perennialplant.org) to learn more details and see pictures of this versatile lavender American native soldier of the landscape!

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOU HAVE
ABOUT YOUR YARD OR GARDEN

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Yard & Garden Newsletter

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The Plan for January...

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If you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who would like to receive the Yard & Garden Newsletter by mail or email, please complete this form and return it to:

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The landscape is blanketed with a deep carpet of snow. The days are short. The sun's power is weak even on a bright day. The outdoors is just not inviting. What's a gardener to do?

HOUSE PLANTS

House plants can be a good diversion during these bleak days of winter. It is important to remember that the basic need for water, light, and food remains unchanged. Our approach to providing these essentials for our house plants does need to be altered during the cool winter months. Light loving plants might need to be moved to a sunnier spot. If that is not possible consider enhancing the light with light bulbs. Most plants thrive best under moderately humid conditions. Our plants can suffer if our houses become too dry. Running a humidifier would benefit plants that are sensitive to low humidity. Since many plants do not actively produce new foliage or flowers during the winter months it is important to avoid over fertilization. A monthly feeding with a half strength liquid fertilizer would keep most of your plants healthy and happy. Avoid placing plants near outside doors that are regularly used. A cold icy blast can shock temperature sensitive plants. In extreme cases regular blasts of cold air can cause leaf drop. Finally, check your plants weekly for moisture needs. Dry indoor air can alter the watering needs of your plants.

STARTING SEEDS

The garden catalogs have started to arrive. E-mail notices of "great deals" on line are starting to pop up. It is actually not too early to begin browsing and making plans for next Spring. Some summer flowers, geraniums for example that are started from seed need to be planted by the end of January to assure flowering by late Spring. A really eager gardener could actually place their seed orders. Ship dates can usually be adjusted to fit the local weather conditions.

MAPPING THE GARDEN PLOT FOR SPRING

Planning next spring's vegetable garden is another good winter time activity. Map out your garden spot on paper. Try to recreate last year's garden and then rotate your crops on paper. Keep in mind that many diseases that affect the tomato family of vegetables stay in the soil. Crop rotation is an important tool in the control of these diseases.

TAKE A TOUR

If the bleakness of winter really has you down, stop by a local garden or floral shop. Blooming plants have a way of cheering up a Minnesota gardener.

SPRING ALIVE !!!

Mark your calendars. Save the date, Saturday, March 20, 2010. We're planning another exciting day of speakers, demonstrations, and fun. Details to follow.

