

# Gardener's Notebook

*Horticultural News and Research*

## CONTROVERSY OVER PROPOSED "WHITE" LIST

OVER THE last several months, word that a federal government-sponsored committee had proposed regulations that would ban the importation, sale, and even possession of plants not listed on a "white" or "clean" list has been raising concern among gardeners, nursery owners, plant societies, and plant industry officials.

One fear, in particular, is that the regulations might be adopted before enough people had a chance to comment on them. But Alan V. Tasker, manager of the National Noxious Weed Program for the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) says there is still plenty of time for public comment before the proposed new regulations become law. "There is not, at this point, a formal proposal," he says. "It will go through at least two cycles of public hearings. We have a stakeholders' registry on the APHIS Web site, [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq)." Tasker urges interested parties to register as a stakeholder.

Controlling invasive species is a costly national problem. "It is now estimated by Cornell University at \$137 billion annually," says Bonnie Harper-Lore ecologist for the Federal Highway Commission of the Department of Transportation. "The ecological cost is also enormous," she adds, "but not so easily quantified."

In response to this problem, the USDA assembled a National Plant Board of 43 state plant regulatory officials to explore the issue. But critics suggest that none of the appointed board members represent nurseries, plant societies, or gardeners.

Joyce Fingerut, president of the North American Rock Garden Society, says one of the board's proposals is for a modified white list. "Previously, plants and seeds had always been checked against a black list, on which all forbidden plants are listed," she explains, as opposed to vegetables and fruits, which had always been

checked against a white list that listed allowed plants. "The idea is to bring the two different types of quarantine in line," she says.

According to Tasker, an Australian program served as a model for the weed regulations currently under consideration. There, the government grandfathered plants already in the country and conducts risk assessment only on new plants coming in. "If we do something, it will probably be along those lines," he adds. "There is no way we can shut down American trade and prevent people doing what they want to do in their home gardens."

## The specter of a white list has caused some soul-searching in the green industry.

In January this year, APHIS published the Draft Action Plan for the Noxious Weed Program and made it available on the Internet. Immediately, cyberspace was abuzz with comments and reactions to the proposed "white" list. Based on the confusing language of the draft plan, which cited a recommendation by the National Plant Board for a "modified clean list," many people concluded that it was suggesting that all plants—those currently grown or those yet to be introduced—could not be legally grown or sold until they were certified as non-invasive. The big question in people's minds was, who would make the decisions on what was considered invasive? "It is very scary to think that someone who can't tell a petunia from a park bench can determine what is and is not to be destroyed and where," wrote AHS member Marge Talt on the AHS Gardening Community Listserv.

Some are more sanguine at the prospect of a white list. Neil Diboll, president of Prairie Nursery in Westfield, Wisconsin, says, "It doesn't hurt to sit back for a while and evaluate the wisdom of allowing unrestricted entry of

non-native plants into our landscapes."

Others prefer self-regulation. Dan Heims of Terra Nova Nurseries in Canby, Oregon, says he has more than once "made the conscious decision to stop selling a plant." He suggests APHIS should identify the noxious or invasive plants but allow nurseries to voluntarily comply.

One thing is certain: The specter of a white list has caused some soul-searching in the green industry. The American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA) is "currently focusing on implementing voluntary industry-wide invasive species codes of conduct," says Craig Regelbrugge, ANLA senior director of government relations. "The codes will encourage those introducing plants new to North America to take prudent measures to assess their invasiveness potential prior to marketing and sale. ANLA also plans to work with industry and outside experts to develop the specific management and decision tools needed to implement the codes."

## ECO-FRIENDLY GOATS ELIMINATE WEEDS

THE NEWEST weapon in the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) arsenal has four legs, horns, and a ravenous appetite for weeds. Goats are being dispatched into sensitive areas such as along river banks or wildlife sanctuaries, where using herbicides



Goats are not fussy eaters and will dine on almost any vegetation.

COURTESY OF USDA

to control invasive exotic weeds such as scotch broom, knapweed, bamboo, and *Rosa multiflora* is particularly problematic.

Goats are an eco-friendly alternative to herbicides. Called “weed-eating machines” by their keepers, they can be tethered or fenced into sensitive areas where they will browse on every leafy spurge or Canada thistle in sight, but, unlike sheep, which tend to overgraze, goats won't eat grass unless there's nothing else left for them. “They eat multiflora rose!” says Betsy Lyman, director of Science and Stewardship at the Nature Conservancy, of the goats they brought in to browse on woody weeds in Nottingham Country Park in Chester County, Pennsylvania. “They are actually more fond of woody plants than herbaceous,” says Karen Budd, formerly with the Nature Conservancy. “For us they ate a lot of *Smilax rotundifolia*.”

The cities of Denver, Colorado, and Cheyenne, Wyoming, are among those leasing goats to fight weeds. In parts of California, where the threat of fires during periods of drought is present, goats eliminate the tinder that dried weeds

provide. Goats have also been put to work on the slopes of Vail, Colorado. And at the Jackson Hole Land Trust, where goats have been spent four summer seasons eating weeds on a 40-acre parcel, the stewardship coordinator says, “you never get eradication, but you get control. Using goats has to be a treatment you apply over a long period.”

You don't need a barn or a degree in animal husbandry to have goats eat your weeds. All you have to do is call one of the companies that leases them. Ewe4IC Ecological Services in Alpine, Wyoming, will deliver 400 ravenous cashmere goats to your weed lot. Covington Farms, near Sacramento, California, will send South African Boer goat crosses.

Two Web sites with information on goats as weed eaters are [www.goatweed eaters.com](http://www.goatweed eaters.com) and [www.goatworld.com](http://www.goatworld.com).

#### GARDEN LITERATURE PRESS: 10TH YEAR

HAVE YOU ever read about a plant you'd like to try and then, just when it was time to purchase it, you found you'd

forgotten what the cultivar was and where it was you'd read about it? Librarian and home gardener Sally Williams had the same problem trying to locate articles she had seen in gardening magazines. “I knew I had seen an article,” she remembers, “and when I went to look it



Sally Williams

up and couldn't find an index, I couldn't believe it.”

Ten years ago, she decided to do something about it. “The day I realized there was a need for an index of gardening articles and I had the skills to do it, I felt as joyful as if it had rained compost,” she says. She compiled and published the first *Garden Literature: An Index to Periodical Articles and Book Reviews* to enthusiastic reviews and has been published annually ever since.

An annotated listing by author and subject of articles, *Garden Literature* includes articles published in leading gar-



## Anticipation is already building for the American Horticultural Society's 80th Anniversary Gala



*The Garden  
as Art*

River Farm main house  
by Donna Sturm

September 28, 2002 6:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.

George Washington's River Farm  
Headquarters of the American Horticultural Society  
Alexandria, Virginia



Join Honorary Chairman, Earl “Rusty” Powell, Director of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the AHS Board of Directors, and the Friends of River Farm for hors d'oeuvres in the gardens and dinner under tents with a spectacular view of the Potomac River. Spend an exciting evening bidding on fabulous silent and live auction items and kicking up your heels with friends in our ballroom!

Funds raised in this event will be used to preserve and maintain the historical beauty of River Farm and to increase our ability to develop River Farm as a national showplace of environmentally responsible horticulture and gardening.

Tickets: \$200 per person

To register or to make a donation, call 1-800-777-7931, ext. 110.

dening magazines both in the United States and the United Kingdom. It also includes a listing by author and title of books reviewed in those magazines. The periodicals indexed include *Allan Lacy's Homeground*, *The American Gardener*, *Brooklyn Botanic Garden Handbooks in the 21st-century Gardening Series*, *Brooklyn Botanic Garden Plants & Gardens News*, *Fine Gardening*, *Flower & Garden*, *Garden Design*, *Horticulture*, *Organic Gardening*, and *Pacific Horticulture* from the United States and *The Garden* (Royal Horticulture Society) and *Gardens Illustrated* from the United Kingdom.

Volume 10, 2001, a softcover book with approximately 200 pages, will be published in May 2002. The price is \$29.95 plus \$3.95 shipping in the United States; \$4.95 shipping to Canada. For more information, contact Garden Literature Press, 398 Columbus Avenue, No. 181, Boston, MA 02116, or call (617) 424-1784.

## RENAISSANCE GRASS

SWITCH GRASS (*Panicum virgatum*), a



prairie native being considered for livestock feed, and fuel alcohol production, serves with distinction as an ornamental—a ground cover, a specimen plant, or as a transition plant in perennial borders. When used as a ground cover, it

presents the aspect of a field of wheat. Many cultivars have been developed, ranging from the scarlet 'Shenandoah' to the erect 'Heavy Metal' to the giant 'Cloud Nine.' All are carefree, tough perennials that need no supplemental

water or fertilizers once established. Switch grass creates a stylish city meadow as it prevents erosion on this slope.

Extremely sturdy, and drought resistant, switch grass roots deeply—sometimes to twice its height or more. It was the grueling labor of breaking up deep-rooted prairie grasses such as switch grass that gave prairie farmers the nickname "sod busters."

Now those deep roots have made switch grass effective for another use: curbing soil runoff. Working at the USDA Agricultural Research Service National Sedimentation Laboratory in Oxford, Mississippi, hydraulic engineer Darrel M. Temple and agronomist Seth M. Dabney tested hedges of switch grass, finding them extremely effective at controlling water-driven soil erosion.

CAROLE OTTESEN



2002 American Horticultural Society TRAVEL STUDY PROGRAM

## Along the Hudson:

Gardens and Fall Color *September 14–21, 2002*



There cannot be a more wonderful way to travel than up the Hudson River to Albany, New York. On this excursion you will visit some of horticulture's hidden treasures right here in the gardens of America. And what an exceptional selection of gardens they are—from Frank Cabot's gardens at Stonecrop to Eliot C. Clarke's gardens in Lithgow, each day's tours will provide design inspiration amid beautiful autumn settings.

The hosts for this tour will be Dr. Norm Lownds, and his wife, Ann. Dr. Lownds is the Associate Professor in the Department of Horticulture at Michigan State University. He is also the Curator of the MSU 4-H Children's Garden. The Lownds' sense of adventure and fun are sure to make this a most memorable experience.

**For complete details of the exciting 2002 schedule, visit the AHS Web site at [www.ahs.org](http://www.ahs.org) or call the Leonard Haertter Travel Company at (800) 942-6666.**

No member dues are used to support the Travel Study Program.