

The American GARDENER

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NOTES FROM RIVER FARM

AT OUR RIVER FARM headquarters, the onset of spring has been marked by the usual floral choreography—from clouds of cherry and pear blossoms, to vibrant sweeps of colorful daffodils and tulips, and, most recently, the delicate blooms of native redbuds and dogwoods at the edge of the woods. In very short order, our magnificent Osage orange tree will once again be leafed out, providing welcome shade from the sun. It is already a common sight to see groups of visitors making the trek down through the André Bluemel Meadow to the bank of the Potomac River. Before long, school will be out and we will be hearing screams of delight from youngsters exploring the Children's Garden and participating in our summer education programs.

This is the time of year when thoughts turn to vacations, travel, and—of course—visiting gardens. Whether you are looking for new plant combinations, seeking inspiration for that new garden area you have in mind, or are just interested in ways to be a better gardener, visiting public gardens is a great way to get fresh ideas. As you begin planning summer excursions, remember to take advantage of the Reciprocal Admissions benefit you receive as a member of the American Horticultural Society. With a record number of gardens now participating in this program, your AHS membership card can be a passport to more than 200 gardens across North America. You can find the listing of participating gardens in the Member Guide that was included in the January/February issue of *The American Gardener*, or visit www.ahs.org for the latest update. And, if your summer travels bring you to our nation's capital, be sure to allow time for a visit to River Farm.

Whatever your plans for the coming months may be, we hope that this issue of *The American Gardener* is the ticket to more enjoyment and success in your garden. If you are interested in adding seating to your garden so you can savor the fruits of your labors, you'll appreciate the article on how to select and place garden benches. Profiles of sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rockroses (*Cistus* and *Halimium* spp.) offer insight into two plant groups suited to totally opposite garden environments. And if fresh salsa sounds appealing, look for some pointers on choosing and growing good salsa peppers in the "Homegrown Harvest" department. Recognizing that gardening is as much about people as it is plants, this issue also features a profile of Betsy Clebsch, a California gardener who is one of the leading experts on the genus *Salvia*.

We'd like to know where your garden travels take you this spring and summer. If you e-mail your favorite destination to us at membership@ahs.org, along with your name, we'll enter you into a drawing for a two-volume set of *Gardens Across America: The American Horticultural Society's Guide to American Public Gardens and Arboreta*. We'll report back on some of our own travels in the next issue.

In the meantime, happy gardening!

Susie Usrey, Chair, AHS Board of Directors

Tom Underwood, Executive Director

