

Step into spring at Cranbrook sale

BY MARTY FIGLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Cranbrook Gardens' 24th annual spring plant sale, "Step Into Spring," is just around the corner.

It will take place 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 15, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, May 16. Cranbrook Gardens are at 380 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills. Park in the Christ Church lot and take the free shuttle to the sale.

Many Michigan wildflowers such as ferns, trillium bloodroot, hepatica, as well as perennials, miniature roses, greenhouse plants and herbs will be offered. A boutique will be filled with outstanding items, and the popular sculpture will be sold. All proceeds go directly for the preservation of the Gardens and their sculpture.

Patrons will be directed to the sale areas through the Walled Sunken Garden, originally a vegetable garden, which will be glowing with about 7,000 tulips and other bulbs. The designer of the bulb plantings and the chairman of this part of the garden is Lee Van Renterghem of West Bloomfield, who has held this position for at least five years.

"This year the tulips form a white serpentine pattern through the beds, the 'ribbon' being the tulip *White Bouquet*," she said.

Each bulb produces three to five flowers. Accompanying the ribbon are "the

truest blue tulip known," *Lafayette*, a double blue grape hyacinth, *Spike*, and a pale, pale yellow tulip, *Cream Delight*. A brilliant lemon yellow tulip, *Mrs. John Scheepers*, will also be in bloom. The garden will be framed by a pale, creamy yellow tulip spotted with red and flamed with rose, *Gudoshnik*.

These bulbs were ordered in late August and planted by volunteers near the end of October last year. It took three days to plant the bulbs.

"We started with 16 to 20 people, but by the third day the numbers were reduced to four to six."

Sphagnum peat moss is spread on the beds and the soil is loosened with a spading fork to incorporate the peat, then as each hole is hand dug, the peat is again worked into the soil as the bulbs are planted.

The tulips are removed from the garden after they bloom, generally in late May, then Carl Krueger of Bloomfield Hills and his crew get busy planting annuals. He and Ralph Lee, another volunteer, submit their ideas for the garden to a Cranbrook garden committee, then the plants are ordered in the fall.

Variety

No yellows, oranges or reds are used; rather pink, white, purple and blue complement the perennial border colors.

"New for this year is *Strada salvia*, a bi-color plant of the year, which forms a ribbon through the garden to separate the various kinds of other annuals," Krueger said.

Extra plants are tucked in a holding garden to fill in and replace damaged plants during the season. Twelve to 16 people help plant the 3,058 annuals in the spring and then these beds are maintained by the two men. Each of the four 90-foot-long and 5-1/2-foot-wide beds will add a colorful accent to this Sunken Garden.

The entire garden is enclosed by walls and blooms mainly in soft colors such as pinks, blues, whites and some yellow. At the East area, which is shady, hostas have been planted, and along the West wall Pearly Everlasting, *Anaphalis margaritacea* blooms pearly white from early August to October. Climbing hydrangeas have been growing on the walls "for at least 40 to 50 years," said Jane McKee of Birmingham.

"There is a special one-of-a-kind Japanese strain that blooms white in early June that is just a gem."

McKee has been chairman of these border gardens since 1981, and a Cranbrook member since 1979.

"There was so much work to do down there (in the Sunken Garden) that we just stayed there."

The side bed on the South wall is 120

feet by 12 feet, and the North wall, 120 feet by eight or 10 feet. Shrubs such as fragrant *Viburnum*, *Carlesii* and peonies that have been in the garden since the Booths lived in the home anchor the garden. Flowering in this garden begins in May and has been designed for sequential bloom throughout the season. In early spring Snow in Summer, *Cerastium tomentosum* blooms along with Purple Rock Cress and Rock Rose, a very pale orange.

Salmon, white and hot orange Oriental Poppies bloom here also, as do Candy Tuft, Phlox, *Alma Putschke* a hot pink "wonderful fall aster," a large mixture of perennial Iris, white Japanese Anemone and toward the end of summer, Globe Thistle.

Dricanure and 39 Plus, 13-13-13, which supplies extra sulphur, are thrown on top of the soil each year to amend it.

A crew of four to five stalwart gardeners helps maintain this garden, weeding, deadheading, etc.

"It's not enough," McKee said.

The Gardens are open to the general public May 1 to Oct. 31. Admission is \$3 general, \$2 seniors and students. Season passes are available. Guided Garden tours are 1:30 p.m. Sundays, June 2 through Sept. 29, for an additional fee. For information about the sale, Garden hours or Cranbrook membership, call (810) 645-3149.

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