

'The Rocket' gives boost to garden

Happy Independence Day! Although *Ligularia stenocphala* isn't red, white or blue, it has a stately look that adds a lot of oomph to a garden.

If we use our imagination we might think the small flowers that grow along the tall spikes of L. "The Rocket," a hybrid, represent a firecracker as its flowers sputter to take off with a shower of orange-yellow sparks.

Its large, ragged, heart-shaped, green leaves with purple on the underside provide a perfect "skirt" for this tall, impressive flower. It needs to be grown in more gardens than we find it in now - if there is an adequate supply of water.

Not all ligularias are as striking as L. "The Rocket." Some are rather common looking, others are also quite handsome.

L. dentata (bigleaf ligularia) has very attractive, large, rounded, dark green leaves that are the focus of this plant.

The bright yellow/orange flowers are daisy-like on tall stems. It forms a clump of rounded, heart-shaped leaves. "Desdemona" and "Othello" are two cultivars you might find interesting.

Also, *Ligularia macrophylla* has large, long, wide, sword-like leaves different from the other species, and *L. sibirica* has large, round, green leaves with silver backs.

Ligularia likes a humus-rich soil, quite moist conditions and partial shade, where it doesn't get afternoon sun, as this will cause the leaves to wilt.

Grow it as a specimen or with skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), candelabra primulas, astilbes and tall, grassy plants.

These plants bloom in the summer and occasionally in early fall. They run in size from a height of 3 to 6 feet and spread 2 to 5 feet.

They may not readily be available at your nursery, but ask about them this fall so the nursery will have time to find them from its suppliers.

The plants can be grown from seed in containers outdoors in the spring, then planted in the garden when they're large enough. They can also be divided. Slugs or snails may be a problem.

The plants I mentioned before that grow well in bog-like conditions are quite varied.

Skunk cabbage peeks through snow cover as early as late February and as its internal temperature increases, melts back the surrounding snow. After flowering, large, rhubarb-like, apple green leaves appear and remain throughout the growing season.

The common name comes from the skunk-like odor of crushed leaf and stem juices. The putrid garbage odor of the flower attracts carrion-loving insects and flies. They follow the scent and unintentionally pollinate the flowers.

Royal fern grows to a height of 4 to 6 feet with broad, lance-shaped fronds and it is truly regal. In early spring, erect, fertile fronds appear that carry the spores. Because the fronds resembled flowering spikes of astilbe, it was

Please see FIGLEY, B2



PHOTO BY MARTY FIGLEY
Taking off: You might want to add *Ligularia "The Rocket"* to your garden next year.

Heart of the home



Bright idea: A kid-friendly kitchen encourages children to serve themselves, rather than depend on Mom and Dad. It also brings the family together in one room for a little quality time. Featured drawers are by Blum.

Kid-friendly kitchens make sense

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER
nstafford@oc.hometown.net

Kids don't simply come home. They bring all their kid's stuff with them: backpacks, permission slips, class projects.

Splnt, they go on the tops of kitchen tables, chairs and counters, cluttering the inherent chaos of the room where we cook, eat and gather.

For younger children, the kitchen can be source of danger and trouble.

Should we ban children from the heart of the home?

Certainly not, as there are numerous ways to make the kitchen not only safe, but also friendly, to younger generations.

"Kid-friendly kitchens - it's a wonderful idea," said Kim Swan-Fugaban, kitchen designer at KSI Kitchen and Bath, which has a showroom in Birmingham.

The key principles to keep in mind are safety and access, she said.

Lower-height counters, for instance, allow children to comfortably reach over or sit at a



Pint-sized assistance: Youngsters learn what's involved in cooking and cleaning when they spend time in the kitchen. And, they may offer to help out, too.

counter. Lowered counters in a multi-level counter system prevent youngsters from coming into contact with a cook top burner.

Kid-friendly features foster children's interest in cooking and helping, too, said Sally Anderson, kitchen designer at Auburn Kitchen & Bath in Rochester Hills.

"If you can get children of both sexes in the kitchen, they can see what's involved. They can start learning how to cook," said Anderson.

Other components encourage independence. At a low sink, for example, children don't require assistance to wash hands or get a glass of water.

Another easy and safe way to nurture self-sufficiency is dedicated storage space for snacks that children are allowed to serve themselves. Under-counter microwaves are easy for children to use, but should be considered carefully before installing.

"It depends on the age of the kids," said Anderson. "A lot of kids are using microwaves now, but not the toddlers."

"Another reason for the kid-friendly trend hinges on the concept of kitchen as family gathering place.

Please see HEART, C2

Private gardens extend welcome for Open days

A special welcome is extended by the Open Days Program of The Garden Conservancy.

The Garden Conservancy is a national not-for-profit organization, founded in 1986 to provide the resources necessary to preserve many of the finest gardens in the United States. Its Open Days event, which began in 1995, offers private gardens for public viewing.

More private gardens than ever before are in the program this year - a total 453 in 26 states from April to October.

These include seven glorious gardens in Oakland County that will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, July 14, rain or shine. Three are in Beverly Hills, three are in Bloomfield Hills and one is in Southfield.

Admission is \$5 at each garden. Discount coupons are available in books of six for \$25, or six for \$20 for Garden Conservancy members, through advance mail order only. Reservations aren't required. Call (888) 842-2442 for more information and wheelchair accessibility.

The tour starts at Judy's Garden, 3916 Cottontail Lane in Bloomfield Hills. The site is between Lahser and Telegraph, north of Maple off Gilbert Lake Road. Visitors will be given a flyer that gives driving directions to the other gardens.

Among the spectacular sights in Judy's Garden are a woodland garden, sun garden and 10,000-gallon water garden with streams and waterfalls. The tour also includes such fantastic scenes as:

- A location where the more formal front gardens and pond were designed to play off the symmetry of the circa 1935 stone Colonial home, and the waterfall, pond and plantings in the back were designed in more natural shapes to blend with the woods and foliage along the Rouge River.

- A site where more than 5,000 perennials were planted, and the back yard features five ponds and waterfalls.

- A front yard enclosed with a picket fence that gives a courtyard effect, with a boxwood parterre,

climbing roses, hosta, clematis, foxglove, daylilies, phlox, Shasta daisies, astilbe, spirea, sedum, honeysuckle, trumpet vines, ferns, and two hydrangea trees on either side of a brick paver walk.

- A hilltop vista with several types of gardens - wetland, woodland, waterfall, hillside, sun and shade - and sculptures by Marshall Fredericks incorporated into the grounds.

- A site with more than 500 hostas, more than 1,000 daylilies, and a pond and rock garden.

- A 15,000-gallon koi pond in the back yard; the property also features winding paths through unusual conifers, more than 150 types of hostas, hundreds of ornamental grasses, flowering perennials and annuals, and rare Japanese maples and dogwoods.

"Discovering these private gardens is like having your own weekend retreat," said Laura Mumaw Palmer, director of the Open Days Program. "There is nothing like a few hours of

Please see GARDEN, C2



PHOTO BY MARLENE ELBERT MONTI

On view: The garden of Toni and Joe Grinnan of Beverly Hills is one of seven in the area open for public viewing in The Garden Conservancy's Open Days Program July 14.