

Beautiful Plant Marriages (and the Odd Ménage à Trois) – April 25/16

by Janet Davis – Visit my blog: www.thepaintboxgarden.com

To choose plants that combine well, visit gardens with lots of diversity in their borders from spring to fall. I love the big ornamental potager-cottage garden at [Spadina House gardens](#) (behind the historic house), especially in early June when the lupines are in flower. And I spend a lot of time photographing at the Toronto Botanical Garden, Leslie & Lawrence, in particular the Piet Oudolf-designed double-sided entry border. You can see my [seasonal photo galleries of the Toronto Botanical garden](#) on their website.



1. ***Brunnera macrophylla* – Siberian Bugloss** – somewhat invasive, but a good groundcover for areas under deciduous trees, i.e. sunny in spring, shady in summer.



- and lungwort (*Pulmonaria saccharata*)
- and Greek windflower (*Anemone blanda* 'White Splendor')
- and red barrenwort (*Epimedium x rubrum*)

- and bleeding hearts (*Dicentra spectabilis* 'Alba' & *D. spectabilis* 'Gold Heart')
- and cowslip (*Primula veris*)

2. ***Mertensia virginica* – Virginia Bluebell** – try to get to CASA LOMA in May to see their Shady Woodland, filled with native wildflowers in these lovely combinations.



- and yellow barrenwort (*Epimedium x versicolor* 'Sulphureum')
- and showy trillium (*T. grandiflorum*)
- and merrybells (*Uvularia grandiflora*)
- and yellow wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*)
- <also showed *Corydalis nobilis* with yellow wood poppy (*S. diphyllum*)> I put this in because I liked it, having seen it in the Shade Garden at Montreal Botanical Garden. [Read my blog on this fabulous garden.](#)

3. ***Polygonatum* sp. – native Solomon's Seal** (great fall colour too!)



- and lungwort (*Pulmonaria saccharata*)
- and bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*)
- and *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation'
- and variegated hosta with *P. x hybridum* 'Striatum'

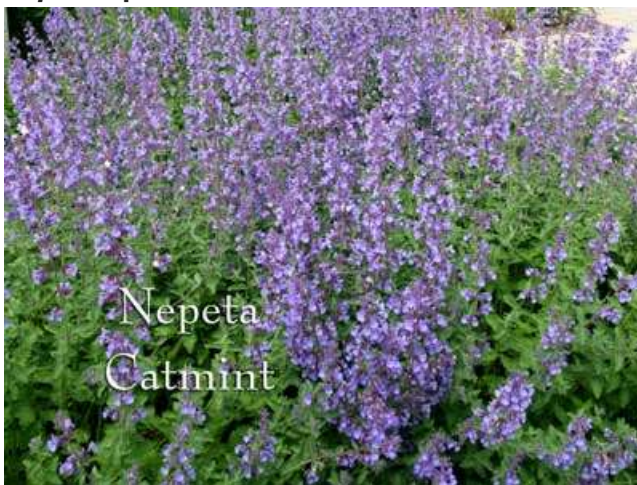
- and columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*)

4. *Aquilegia* sp. – Columbine



- and Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*)
- and Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera macrophylla*)
- and Allium 'Globemaster' (with A. 'Nora Barlow')
- and *Papaver rupifragum*
- and Hosta 'Albo-Marginata' (with white columbine)
- and sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
- and double buttercup (*Ranunculus acris* 'Flore-Pleno')
- and bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*)
- and golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)
- and yellow flag iris (*I. pseudacorus*)
- and foxglove penstemon (*P. digitalis*) – with A. canadensis
- and 'Joanna Reed' catmint (*Nepeta*) – with A. canadensis

5. *Nepeta* sp. – Catmint



- *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' and lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), *Allium cristophii*, 'Caradonna' meadow sage (*Salvia nemorosa*) and peony (*Paeonia* 'Krinkled White')
- and variegated bigroot cranesbill (*Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Variegatum')
- and peony ('Krinkled White' & 'Morning Lilac')
- 'creaming Yellow' wild indigo (*Baptisia sphaerocarpa*) with *Nepeta* 'Joanna Reed'

6. ***Baptisia australis* – Blue False Indigo**



- and spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*)
- 'Prairie Smoke' and bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*)
- and *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' with *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'
- and peony (*Paeonia lactiflora* cv)

7. ***Paeonia* sp. – Peony**



- and 'Caradonna' meadow sage (*Salvia nemorosa*) with 'Buckeye Belle'
- and star-of-Persia allium (*A. cristophii*) with *P.* 'Festiva Maxima' & 'Jules Elie'

- and bluestar (*Amsonia tabernamontana*) with P. 'Krinkled White'
- and foxglove penstemon (*P. digitalis*) with P. 'Celebrity'
- and Geranium 'Rozanne' (with P. 'Sequestered Sunshine')
- and Russell hybrid lupines
- and yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia punctata*) with 'Jules Elie'
- and spiderwort (*Tradescantia 'Sour Grapes'*) with 'Sea Shell'

8. ***Iris* sp. – Iris** (Bearded, Siberian & Japanese) If you like irises, head to the [Laking Garden Iris Garden](#) at the Royal Botanical Garden, Burlington, around the first or second week in June. Their iris beds are spectacular!



- and columbines (*Aquilegia vulgaris*) with bearded iris
- and Canada anemone (*A. canadensis*) with bearded iris & 'Therese Bugnet' shrub rose
- and Euphorbia griffithi 'Fireglow' (not Dexter 😊) with bearded iris
- and lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), with Japanese iris (goes with all)
- and Oriental poppy – with Siberian iris
- and columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*) with Siberian iris
- and Russell hybrid lupine (*Lupinus*) with Siberian iris
- and goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*) with Siberian iris

9. **Lupinus sp. – Lupine** – go to Spadina House around first-second week in June to see a cottage garden confection of lupines, sweet rocket, early cranesbills, cuckoo-flower, peonies and irises. Free parking near the Casa Loma stables any day but Thursday.



- Russell hybrid lupines and sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
- and bearded iris

10. **Salvia nemorosa – Meadow Sage** – shrubby ornamental sages. Cut back after flowering and they'll often rebloom in late summer. Fabulous for honey bees and bumble bees.



- 'Blue Hill' and Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*)
- and columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*)
- and Russell hybrid lupine (*Lupinus*)
- and goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)
- and Itoh peony 'Kopper Kettle'
- and oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- and burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*)
- and catmint (*Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low')
- and musk mallow (*Malva moschata*)

- and corn poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) and sweet William catchfly (*Silene armeria*) in the “Rocky Ledge” garden at Chanticleer Garden, just outside Philadelphia. I consider this to be the finest small public garden in North America. [Read my 2-part blog on Chanticleer](#), beginning here.
- and ‘Anthea’ yarrow (*Achillea*) – with *Salvia verticillata* ‘Purple Rain’

11. ***Penstemon* sp. – Beardtongue** – can’t take wet feet in winter. Need well-drained soil.



- *P. hirsutus* (pictured above) and prairie smoke (*G. triflorum*)
- *P. grandiflorus* and oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) on the septic bed at my cottage on Lake Muskoka. (succulent grayish leaves, biennial)
- *P. grandiflorus* and blue flax (*Linum lewisii*)
- *P. digitalis* with *Phlomis* ‘Amazone’ & *Allium* ‘Gladiator’ – Piet Oudolf combo at the Toronto Botanical Garden
- *P. digitalis* and *Coreopsis lanceolata* at my cottage in gravelly soil.
- *P. digitalis* and *Knautia macedonica* with ‘Ice Ballet’ swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- *P. cobaea* var. *purpurea* with *Coreopsis lanceolata* in gravel, Muskoka.
- *P. barbatus* with butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*)
-

12. ***Geranium* sp. – Cranesbills**



- G. Johnson's Blue' with Heuchera 'Lime Rickey
- G. maculatum and golden alexanders (Zizia aurea) – TBG native woodland
- G. pratense and Coreopsis lanceolata - Spadina
- G. 'Brookside' and Campanula punctata and Salvia nemorosa 'May Night'
- Mourning widow cranesbill (G. phaeum 'Samobor') and Bowles' golden grass (Millium effusum 'Aureum') – at Van Dusen Gardens. Not sure about hardiness of grass.
- G. x cantabrigiense 'Biokovo' with hosta
- G. 'Brookside' with Knautia macedonica
- G. 'Brookside' with yellow loosestrife (Lysimachia punctata)
- G. 'Rozanne' with Veronica 'Eveline' and yarrow (Achillea tomentosa)

13. ***Lavandula angustifolia* – Lavender** – needs dry feet in winter and very well-drained, gritty soil. Shear plants back by half right after flowering in summer.



- with Coreopsis verticillata
- with Gaillardia x grandiflora
- with Oenothera tetragona 'Sonnenwende'
- with Veronica spicata 'Red Fox'
- with Rosa 'Bonica'

14. *Delphinium* – **Delphinium** – look for shorter strains to minimize staking.



- *D. elatum* with goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)
- *D. elatum* 'Summer Skies' with foxglove (*Digitalis purpureus*)
- *D. grandiflorum* with *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'
- *D. grandiflorum* with *Hemerocallis* 'Strawberry Candy'

15. *Rosa* – **Rose**



- climbing roses entwined with clematis – make sure it's one of the Group 3 clematis that is pruned to the lowest buds in spring, e.g. Polish Spirit, Etoile Violette, Ernest Markham, or smaller-flowered Group 2 that can be pruned in spring, e.g. Jackmanii, Comtesse de Bouchaud, Perle d'Azur. You don't want a mess of stems from types of clematis that only flower on old growth with your rose canes.
- with lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) – frothy underplanting to hide bare canes
- *R.* 'Pink Gruss an Achen' with Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium* 'Gateway')
- *R.* Sweet Vigorosa ('KORdatura') with Veronica 'Eveline', English lavender & *Achillea tomentosa*

16. **Hemerocallis – Daylily** – some of my photos were made in Marnie Wright’s Bracebridge area garden – [see my blog on this wonderful garden](#) -- which was carved out of a spruce bog. Though she added to the soil level, it still has the right amount of moisture for daylilies to thrive.



- H. lilioasphodelus with spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*)
- with tall, fuchsia-pink *Astilbe tacquetii* ‘Purple Lance’
- with balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*)
- with beebalm (*Monarda didyma*)
- dwarf daylilies with blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)
- with summer phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) in orange-magenta combo
- with *Salvia verticillata* ‘Purple Rain’
- with catmint (*Nepeta*) and butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- common orange daylily (*H. fulva*) with monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*)
- H. ‘Jade Star’ with Rudbeckia ‘Goldsturm’
- with pink meadowsweet (*Filipendula rubra*)

17. **Rudbeckia sp. – Blackeyed Susan** – some of my photos of Rudbeckia companions were made at the new Legacy Prairie at Niagara Botanical Garden School of Horticulture (sited just behind the Butterfly Conservatory). It’s a great place to study combinations of prairie native plants. [Read about it in my blog.](#)



- with blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), gray-headed coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*) and vervain (*Verbena hastata*) at Niagara BG
- with wild beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*)
- with Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)
- with dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)
- R. 'Goldsturm' with summer phlox (*P. paniculata*)
- R. 'Goldsturm' with balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*)
- R. 'Goldsturm' with great blue lobelia (*L. siphilitica*)
- R. 'Goldsturm' with little bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- R. 'Goldsturm' with Eastern bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*), a shade-loving native bunchgrass
- R. hirta 'Toto' with swiss chard at Montreal Botanical Garden
- fancy R. hirta (biennial gloriosa daisy) cultivars with blue cornflower in a large meadow at Montreal BG
- *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Cherry Brandy' with Tiger Eyes sumac, goldenrod, heuchera and Tuscan kale at the Montreal BG
- sweet blackeyed susan (*R. subtomentosa*) with New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)
- *R. subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers' with rattlesnake master (*E. yuccifolium*)
- *R. subtomentosa* with *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen'

18. ***Asclepias* sp. – Milkweeds** – not only are the milkweeds vital to the life cycle of the monarch butterfly (as larval food for the caterpillars), they are wonderful nectar & pollen plants for all pollinating insects. They all have different cultural needs, but at least one native species should be in every garden (and of course, in large quantities to attract lots of insects).



- orange butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), my favourite perennial with wild beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*) at my cottage on Lake Muskoka
- *Asclepias tuberosa* with red *Echinacea* 'Firebird'
- multiple insects on *Asclepias tuberosa*.

- *Asclepias tuberosa* with pink Orienpet lily 'Robina' ([read about this lily in my blog](#))
- 'Ice Ballet' white swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*) with 'Purple Fortune' anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)
- *Asclepias incarnata* 'Ice Ballet' with 'Fascination' Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*) and *Stachys* 'Hummelo'

19. *Echinacea* – Purple Coneflower & hybrids



- with *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm' in my own front garden
- with wild beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*)
- *E.* 'All That Jazz' with *Echinops bannaticus* 'Blue Mist' – great bee plants
- yellow *Echinacea* 'Sundown' with *Festuca glauca*, *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam' and *Delphinium grandiflorum* at the Toronto BG.
- *E.* 'Primadonna White' dwarf coneflower with *Lilium henryi* at Montreal BG
- *E.* 'White Swan' with white obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana* 'Alba')
- with white form of great blue lobelia (*L. siphilitica* 'Alba')
- with *Helenium autumnale* 'Fuego' and Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) in the Oudolf border at the TBG
- with chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) at the Royal Botanical Garden, including some cool rusty ironwork that enhances the coneflowers
- with the grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*
- *E.* 'Vintage Wine' with *Helenium autumnale*
- with the drooping flower spikes of *Sanguisorba tenuifolia* 'Alba'
- with Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium* 'Gateway')

20. *Liatris* sp. – Blazing Star, Gayfeather



- *L. spicata* with Echinacea 'Vintage Wine' at the TBG
- with calamint (*Calamintha nepeta*) at the TBG – both bee plants!
- with sea holly (*Eryngium*) at the TBG
- with statice (*Limonium latifolium*) at the TBG
- with palm sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*)

21. *Perovskia atriplicifolia* – Russian Sage



- with calamint (*Calamintha nepeta*) at the TBG – great bee plants!
- with *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Golden Gain'
- with rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) at the TBG
- with 'Gold Plate' yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)
- with *Astilbe tacquetii* 'Purple Lance'
- with 'Becky' Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum superbum*)
- with *Nicotiana* 'Whisper Rose Shades'
- with *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail'
- with 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora*)
- with *Sedum* 'Red Cauli' (*Hylotelephium*)

- with Sedum 'Autumn Joy' (*Hylotelephium telephium*)

22. *Hylotelephium telephium* – Pink Sedum, Stonecrop



- 'Autumn Joy' with *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks'
- 'Autumn Fire' with blue mist bush (*Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Summer Sorbet'). This is a wonderful combination for bees.
- 'Autumn Joy' with obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*) and *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen' in my garden

23. *Physostegia virginiana* – Obedient Plant



- with New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)
- with pink turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*) and goldenrod
- with *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen'

24. *Solidago* sp. – Goldenrod

- with Japanese anemone (*A. tomentosa* 'Robustissima')
- with blue mist bush (*Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Summer Sorbet')
- with New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)



And finally, here is the promised photo of my favourite butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) flowering in the granitic grit of a footpath on Lake Muskoka. This was the plant I mentioned whose seed I 'kicked' into the soil with the toe of a boot.

