

## Virtual Hortlandia 2020

### Miller's Manor Gardens Nursery

[www.millersmanorgarden.com](http://www.millersmanorgarden.com)

This week Joanne Fuller interviewed Lynda Miller at Miller's Manor Garden Nursery and edited the interview for this article.

#### *How did you start the nursery?*

It's a hobby that got out of control. My husband made a mistake 49 years ago and showed me how to hybridize an iris. I started growing iris in Indiana in 1976. My husband took a job transfer to Oregon in 2006, and I came the following year. I kept breeding Iris, and we got into growing other plants, particularly fuchsia. We now grow 150 varieties of hardy fuchsias. We both work part-time for Sebright Nursery, and I still create new iris cultivars that are introduced by Mid-America Nursery.

#### *What are some of your favorite plants?*

Though I breed iris, I love unusual conifers. Yellow conifers are so fun. *Pinus contorta* 'Taylor's Sunburst' is tall and thin with bright golden-yellow new growth tips. The yellow lasts for about six weeks. It hasn't been around long enough to determine its ultimate height, but probably fifteen feet. A nice one is *Pinus mugo* 'Bierun'. It is yellow-green during spring and summer. Then, in late fall, as the days get cooler, it turns bright golden yellow. Summer visitors ignore it, but when people see it in winter, they love it. It has better winter color than 'Chief Joseph,' and it is compact, so it's easier to incorporate in the garden. *Pinus mugo* 'Jakobsen' is a nice size with small crests on the ends of branches that make it look lumpy-- almost a natural bonsai. Maybe it's a favorite because it's weird--you have to see it to appreciate it. It gets only about two feet tall to three feet wide over a long period of time.

#### *What about favs you are selling in the nursery?*

I think we have some great penstemon this year. Penstemon 'Mockingbird' is a natural cross that we discovered. It has red-violet flowers with a white throat. Like so many penstemon, it blooms for such a long time, and it's so easycare. I'm also fond of hardy geraniums. We have one called G. 'Boom Chocolatta' (*Geranium pratense* 'Boom Chocolatta'). It has dark bronze-chocolate foliage with a mound of blue flowers. It is more vigorous than some of the other dark leaved geraniums.

Of course, we grow and sell so many great fuchsias. Fuchsia 'Thomasina' is a knockout in the garden. It has big flowers. The terracotta orange sepals are tipped with green, with dark red coronas. Another great one is Fuchsia 'Preston Guild'. It has smaller flowers with white sepals and purple centers. It's very showy in a dark area with some afternoon sun. These plants are both hummingbird magnets.

#### *What about Iris?*

I breed miniature tall bearded iris. These are dainty iris on tall stems. We don't sell them, but they are sold and introduced by Sebright Nursery's sister company, Mid-America Nursery. One I

am very proud of that has won several national awards, is Iris 'Bangles'. It has amethyst standards with sapphire falls and fits its name because it has a sparkly shine to the petals.

### ***Do you have tips for growing iris?***

There are so many types of iris that my first tip is know which type you are planting. There are species and types of iris that are "weed tolerant", meaning they can tolerate some crowding. I think of these as "perennial compatible" growing well in a mixed border.

Most people want to grow tall bearded iris that want lots of sun, good air circulation and their own space to grow. If they get too crowded, they will decline. They also need to be divided frequently to grow well. They are best divided in mid-July to mid-September, if you want the plants to have the best bloom the following year. When divided, the fans should be separated and all the dead leaves pulled off each fan. Then, the fans are replanted with their own space.

Since most iris do not rebloom, you want to choose cultivars with good foliage. Since we have so many iris growers in Oregon, I recommend going to the grower and looking at them growing in fields and display gardens. That is the best way to select foliage that will work for your garden.

### ***What is it like shopping at your nursery now?***

We are open by appointment. You just need to call us at either 503-277-3327 or 503-899-7160. We have a display garden with very rare conifers and both shade and sun-loving plants. The plants for sale are scattered over about two acres. Our greenhouses are open on both ends with good ventilation. Keeping social distancing has been no problem for visitors. We have hand sanitizer and wipes available.

We are part of the Cascade Nursery Trail. The nurseries in this group are planning an open weekend, July 11 & 12, 2020. We are also planning a "jewel box" sale--like a pop-up-- at Sebright Nursery on August 22, 2020. Watch our website at [www.millermanorgarden.com](http://www.millermanorgarden.com) for up to date information.