

## New Perennials to Propagate

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The perennials I have chosen to present today should be on every perennial growers list. Although relatively new, they are not B.I.O. plants, (meaning "Botanic Interest Only," to quote John Elsley of Wayside Gardens, Hodges, South Carolina).

**First is the Galaxy Series of Achilleas.** This group was originally hybridized by Heinz Klose in Germany by crossing *Achillea millefolium* with *A. taygetea* (Bot. Ed. note: the species *taygetea* is not a valid name) and *A. filipendulina*. The resulting crosses and back-crosses have yielded colors from pure white to shades of yellow, pink, salmon, red, and bronze. In combination with each other or with other border perennials, they are nothing less than dazzling. They bloom off and on from late spring to fall. They are easy to propagate and grow from division or tip cutting in early spring or any time during the growing season a week or two after they have been severely dead-headed. In general, these plants should be dead-headed because they are fertile and the seeds will be variable. If you don't wish to maintain the individual cultivars of this series, they can easily be done by mixed seeds.

***Angelica gigas*.** *Angelica* is actually a biennial or monocarpic plant. Its only known wild location is on an army base in South Korea. Rumor has it that Barry Yinger negotiated a live mine field on that base in order to collect seeds from this rare species. Its mahogany stems and bronze-red flowers make a bold statement in the perennial border. Germination of seed is fairly straight forward but the seeds must be collected and sown as soon as possible after ripening since they are short-lived. The plant will take sun or part shade and tolerates all normal growing conditions in our climate. It performs well in Zones 3-8.

***Baptisia pendula*.** *Baptisia pendula* (also known as *B. lactea*) is a 30- to 36-in. vase-shaped plant which has purple stems, lime green leaves, and milky-white flowers in late May and June. It has a very architectural look throughout the growing season and makes a dramatic center of focus in the garden. Unlike other *Baptisia* species, the seed pods hang down, thus the species name *pendula*. It can be propagated by tip cuttings in the early spring but is more commonly done by seed. Like many members of the pea family (Fabaceae), the seeds have a tough cellulose coating and may benefit by some form of scarification but they don't require winter stratification. The plant is not fussy and has no disease or pest problems to my knowledge. It will take full sun or part shade and is hardy from Zone 4 to 9.

***Lobelia cardinalis*.** *Lobelia cardinalis* 'Ruby Slippers' is probably a cross between *L. cardinalis* and *L. siphilitica* 'Alba' back-crossed to *L. cardinalis*. The result achieves a sparkling ruby-red as compared to the blood red of the native cardinal flower. For unknown reasons it tends to bloom later than the species and is one of the only bright reds blooming in our garden in Sept. to Oct. Propagation by tip cutting or division is easy in the early spring. Like most cardinal flowers, it prefers moist, loamy soil and will prosper in full sun or part shade. It is hardy from Zone 4 to 8.

***Salvia verticillata*.** *Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain' has smokey purple spikes from late spring to hard frost. It will bloom even more heavily if the spent spikes are dead-headed regularly. Unlike the better known *S. nemorosa* types, 'Purple Rain' tends to be rather lax of habit, making it perfect for tumbling over the front of the border or softening the lines of harsher or more linear-foliaged plants. Its delicate, pastel shade blends well with almost any color and lends an aura of subtlety to the summer border. This cultivar propagates easily by tip or lateral cuttings during most times of the year but when the plant is blooming it should be dead-headed before cutting. 'Purple Rain' is virtually trouble free. It is tolerant of most garden conditions but need full sun to perform at maximum. It is safe in Zone 6-9 and usually all right in Zone 5.

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## Propagation of *Daphne ×burkwoodii* 'Carol Mackie'

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*Daphne ×burkwoodii* 'Carol Mackie' is a beautiful landscape plant with variegated foliage and fragrant light-pink flowers. It grows 3 to 4 ft high and 4 to 6 ft wide. This plant has proven to be quite winter hardy in Vermont, at least to -40F, and grows well in full sun or part shade. There are apparently two or more clones being sold as 'Carol Mackie' in the trade. My discussion will be on my experience with the clone that originated in Vermont in the late 1960s as a branch sport on *Daphne ×burkwoodii* 'Somerset'.

I began growing and propagating 'Carol Mackie' in 1982. The first summer that I took cuttings I got better than 90% rooting. These plants grew like weeds in the field for the next few years. It was easy to get excited about such a nice new plant growing so well. The *Daphne* gods must have been with me on that first crop! For the next few years rooting results were erratic and I experienced some difficulties growing the plant, especially in containers. We have since worked out some of the problems, but 'Carol Mackie' can still be frustrating to root and grow. I would like to share some of my observations, successes, and failures.

We take most of our cuttings between mid July and mid August. Our experience has been that cuttings taken earlier than this are generally too soft and rot at the base. I look for the new growth to harden a bit, but still be growing at the tip. The bark near the base of the cutting should be starting to turn a light brown color. The wood of *Daphne* is quite tough and stringy so it is important to have a very sharp pruner or knife to take the cuttings. The stock plants that we use are 3- to 6-year-old field plants with vigorous growth that have received good soil fertility. To prepare the cuttings we pinch out the growing tip and strip the leaves off of the bottom third of the cutting. Ideally we strip the lower leaves with one quick downward pull. This doesn't always work. Some batches of cuttings, usually the softer ones, need to have their leaves plucked off individually because the petiole does not separate cleanly from the stem and we end up stripping off too much bark. Our cuttings are about 4 in. long.

Sanitation is very important since *Daphne* cuttings are prone to fungus problems under mist. We disinfect flats, benches, and work areas with a 10% bleach solution. Isopropyl alcohol is used on pruners and hands. Our rooting medium is super course perlite and medium grade vermiculite (1 : 1, v/v). We try to use a flat that is at least