

Stream Cliff Herb Farm

by Betty Manning

This is the real thing. These are four and five generations of people who have a strong sense of place and who have respected and cared for and drawn sustenance from the land.

—Roger Swain,
host of PBS Victory Garden.

Stream Cliff Herb Farm is a family farm which has been in our family for over 100 years. With our grandchild, six generations of family have lived here. (Mikayla lived here last fall with her parents as their new home was being completed.)

The farm carries a rich history. During the Civil War, it was raided by Morgan's Raiders. They numbered 2,000 to 3,000, the raid occurring in July of 1863.



A rustic twig heart set within the gardens symbolizes the love of the Manning family for this land and the beauty of what grows upon it.



James Harmon, a bachelor from Maine, built the house and the barn circa 1836. He lived in a hollow tree while he baked the bricks to use in building the house. When he died, he gave the property to the Methodist church. They owned the farm for two years. Since then, my grandmother's family has lived on the farm.

This is a very spiritual place, a place to give yourself time to look around and find the beauty in nature. I love it beyond words.

—Betty Manning.

Tucked within the arbor of the Garden Path are bluebird nests!

The gardens are dedicated to my grandmother, Luella Tate Artz. She lived on the farm for more than 50 years and was a quilter and a gardener. Consequently, quilt shapes are used for the overall design of most of the gardens. The quilt patterns include Grandmother's Fan, Dresden Plate, Log Cabin and a heart in a square that is part of the Crucifix Garden.

Many vines and, more recently, hostas line the long Blue Bird Arbor Trail. Five water areas quench butterfly thirsts and lend gentle melodies to secret gardens.

Most of the buildings have had a previous life. The Grandmother's Keeping Room, which we use for large groups, classes and guest speakers, was previously used by my grandparents as a grainery. My grandmother kept her treasures, such as old aprons, feed sacks, and advertisement items, upstairs. Originally, the structure was built by the railroad as a temporary boarding house for the men working in the stone quarry. The men chipped and hauled limestone for the railroad bed laid

through Commiskey in the early 1870's. In 1868, a team of mules, Pete and Belle, moved the building from the adjacent field to where it now rests. We still have the rope and pulleys they used. It must have been quite a job, as it took two weeks to move it here.

The Country Store was previously a chicken house, and Aunt Betty's Cabin was my grandfather's blacksmith shop. The Summer Kitchen served as Dr. Matthew's office in Commiskey. Years later, it was moved here. Even the Tea Room had an earlier life as our first small greenhouse.



Quaint signs direct visitors to the quilt gardens planted in Grandmother Artz's memory. Red impatiens provide vibrant, summer-long bloom to the heart in the center of the Crucifix Garden.





A trellis is quickly covered for the summer with annual vines such as *Thunbergia*, the black-eyed-Susan vine.

If I have no other message, I want to feel like I've improved the world simply by having lived.

-Betty Manning



Leaving the Bluebird Arbor and just outside the Fairy Garden, visitors discover Elizabeth's Bridal Garden, named in honor of the Mannings' daughter who was married therein. A focal point of Elizabeth's Garden is a water garden with a charming cherub atop the cascading waterfall pedestal.



A gardener's treat is to note the various plant combinations throughout the gardens. This shady nook demonstrates that color and texture are possible even under minimal light conditions. The three herbs Betty recommends for planting around a pond are old-fashioned roses for scent and lavender and thyme for color and texture. Inside the pond? She recommends mint and horsetail (*Equisetum*)!

I tend to let things grow together, but that's my style. I like for everything to look natural, and I don't get into a fuss about it. If the bugs eat them, I let them eat.

-Betty Manning

Our philosophy of gardening is to live naturally. Consequently, we try to be as organic as possible and use beneficial insects in the greenhouses. Many times we are told that plants purchased here grow better. We tell customers that we do not use growth retardants that are widely used in commercial greenhouses. What amazes me is that, unless the sellers grow the plants themselves, they have no idea that the plants are treated. The reason plants are treated is to prolong the shelf life of the plant. Because growth retardants keep the plants small, they can be kept in smaller and more economical



Outside one of the gift shops, a collection of barrels and "primitive" farm implements showcase native plants and herbs.



Part of the Farm's herb sales are set up under lattices to create the partial shade required by some plants.

pots, while still blooming. Always be suspicious of such chemical enhancements when you see a uniform flat of flowers, all in bloom, but with the plants small in size. We feel these treatments particularly affect the ultimate size of annuals.



Rustic and quaint signs identify the special gardens at Stream Cliff Herb Farm.



The Fairy Garden is beloved of both adults and children. A stream, watched over by statues of fairies and angels, begins its winding path through the garden where it disappears in the shady border to reappear under a bridge and mingle with the waters of the lily pond.

You involve children in gardens by planting herbs and flowers that have stories associated with them.

—Betsy Williams,
herbalist and garden writer



Near the Garden's entry is the Children's Garden, full of butterflies and bees collecting fragrant nectar. Betty notes children especially enjoy sunflowers, scented geraniums, thyme (for fairies!), and morning glories. Area children, visiting the Farm for Betty's newest project, a children's garden club, also enjoy the pettable goats.

To be a gardener is to be generous, and the best gifts are the ones that are homemade. Betty is teaching people crafts that are as pertinent to the 21st century as they were to the 19th. This is a center for rural education. We need to pass those skills on to the next generation.

—Roger Swain,
host of PBS Victory Garden.

While visiting Stream Cliff Farm, if you are interested in other things to do and a place to stay, we suggest visiting the quaint town of Madison on the Ohio River. Our son-in-law, Chip, and his family operate the Attic/Coffee Mill Café and Pronto Pizza & Pasta in the historic river-town. Also in Madison is a favorite B & B, The Schussler House (812-352-9999.) M&M Hunting Preserve is in our immediate area, too. (812-346-2514.) The hilly countryside around Commiskey offers delightful excursions. Only a mile and a half from the farm, you can even drive through one of Indiana's famous covered bridges. For more information, call the following tourism offices: Jennings County (800-928-3667), Madison (800-559-2956), Columbus (800-468-6564), and Seymour (888-524-1914). Enjoy Southern Indiana!☘

Visit www.streamclifffarm.com for more information about scheduled activities at the Farm, including Betty's newest adventure, a children's garden club.



Birdhouses are tucked throughout the garden. This one, set near the family home, is adorned with bird-enticing blooms.

AAS Gold Medal Winners 2001

*Text and Photos
courtesy of All-America Selections*

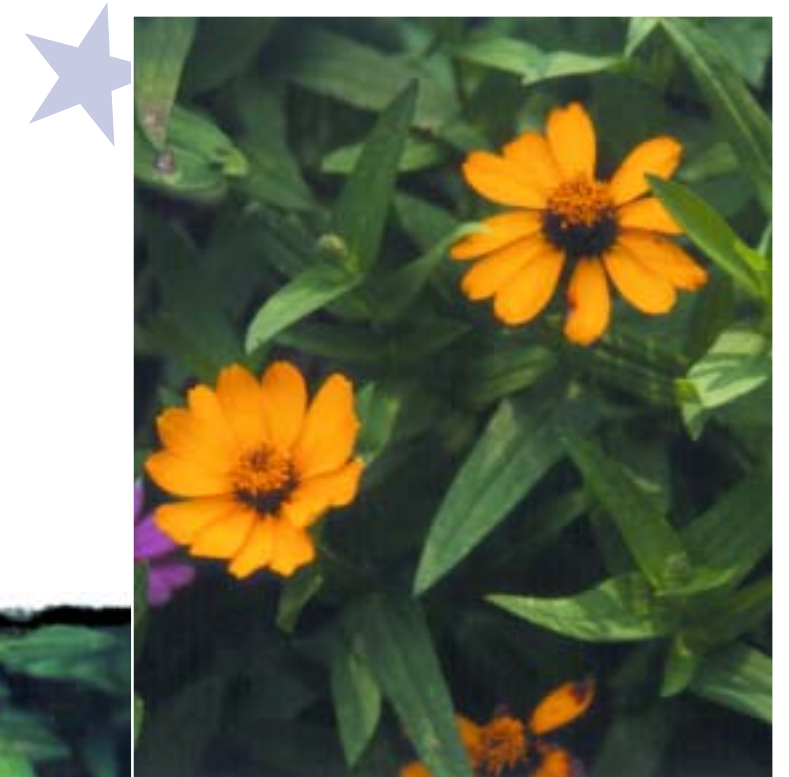
Gardeners have grown to trust the proven performance of AAS Winners. People often ask, "Who decides if a new variety is worthy of an AAS Award?" Unpaid, independent AAS Judges evaluate and score the entries at their judging locations. This panel of experts donates time throughout the summer to evaluate the entries, giving each a score from 0 to 5. Only the entries with the highest average score are considered for an AAS Award. Winners generally have at least two or even three significantly improved qualities over the closest comparison variety available to home gardeners.

If you are interested in learning the test sites, visit the website at www.all-america-selections.org. The mission, history, and last five years of AAS Winners are also featured on the site. Use the direct link to the Retail Locator to find retail stores offering AAS winner seed or plants at www.aaswinners.com.

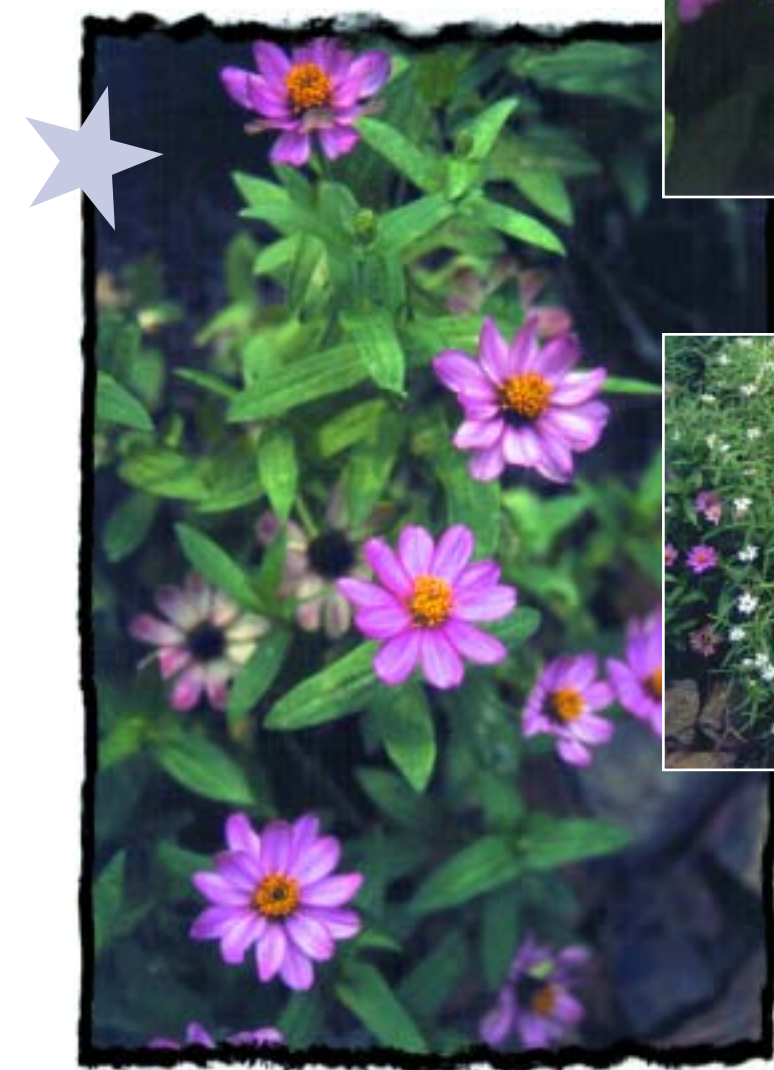


AAS Gold Medal Flower Award Winner: *Zinnia 'Profusion White'*

'Profusion White' captured the AAS Gold Medal as a breeding breakthrough in its ease of growing and length of the flowering season. This is the only white *Zinnia* with 2 1/2-inch single, daisy-like flowers and proven disease and mildew resistance. With a spread of 12 to 24 inches in full sun, the plant blooms profusely from early spring through fall even as other zinnias deteriorate from powdery mildew. Low-maintenance is assured with no pinching or pruning required.



Although 'White Profusion' won the AAS Gold Medal Flower Award, the 'Profusion' series is available in other colors, each with the same desirable traits of long bloom season and mildew resistance.



The pink form of the *Zinnia* 'Profusion' series lives up to its name.



In the test garden at *Southern Living* magazine in Birmingham, Alabama, a slightly raised bed displays the bountiful blooms of *Zinnia* 'White Profusion.'



**AAS Bedding
Plant Award Winner:
Nicotiana F1
'Avalon Bright Pink'**

'Avalon Bright Pink' is an improved dwarf *Nicotiana* that provides a multitude of star-shaped blooms throughout the growing season. The unusual shade of bright pastel pink is visible from quite a distance. The heat-tolerant plants reach a mature height of 10 inches with a spread of 10 to 12 inches. Because no deadheading is required, 'Avalon Bright Pink' is maintenance free. Easy to grow, 'Avalon Bright Pink' is widely adaptable to annual or perennial border plantings as well as to patio container culture.



**AAS Bedding
Plant Award Winner:
Eustoma F1 'Forever Blue'**

'Forever Blue' provides gardeners with the sometimes hard-to-find blue color throughout the gardening season. The 2 1/2-inch, single, blue flowers decorate vigorous plants. With a distinctive branching habit, 'Forever Blue' bears a multitude of blooms on a rather dense plant. This trait has been submitted for a utility patent. Given a full sun garden, 'Forever Blue' plants will grow to 12 inches when mature. Proven to be heat tolerant, 'Forever Blue' plants benefit from deadheading like other *Eustoma* (lisianthus) and are adaptable to patio containers.



**AAS Bedding
Plant Award Winner:
Portulaca F1 'Margarita Rosita'**

'Margarita Rosita' looks different from other *Portulaca* as a young plant with its compact, mounded habit that resembles a rock garden or alpine plant. Semi-double, 1 1/2-inch, vibrant rose flowers adorn the small 3-to-4-inch fleshy-leaved plants. 'Margarita Rosita' needs a sunny garden spot or a patio container to reach its mature spreading plant habit of 12 to 14 inches. Heat and drought tolerant, 'Margarita Rosita' flowers continuously for months with only minimal garden care. Easy-to-grow, 'Margarita Rosita' thrives in any container, including unglazed terracotta that tend to dry soil quickly.

**AAS Flower
Award Winner:
Sunflower 'Ring of Fire'**

'Ring of Fire' is a dream plant for the wildlife garden. Bearing a five-inch



flower with golden petal edges and a ring of fire surrounding the chocolate brown center, it stands out in a crowd of plain gold or yellow sunflowers. Although later to bloom than other summer flowers, requiring 120 days to show its bicolor petals, 'Ring of Fire's' late season display gives your garden a fresh new look. Give the plant a full sun garden to enable it to reach 4 to 5 feet in height and a spread of 2 to 3 feet. The long flower stems are perfect for cut flowers, but you may prefer to let 'Ring of Fire' produce seed for wildlife. ♡