

Friends of Old Bulbs Gazette

[Old House Gardens](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, 734-995-1486

“Summer is the time when one sheds one’s tensions with one’s clothes, and the right kind of day is jeweled balm for the battered spirit. A few of those days and you can become drunk with the belief that all’s right with the world.”

-Ada Louise Huxtable (1921-2013), American writer, architecture critic and MacArthur Fellow

Brand New at Our Website: A Trio of Terrific Hyacinths...



[‘Splendid Cornelia’](#)



[‘Fondant’](#)



[‘Minos’](#)



[‘La Riente’](#)



[‘Doctor Alex Fleming’](#)



[‘Katharine Hodgkins’](#)

Vanessa is always on the lookout for historic hyacinths and has found Dutch farmers still growing three fragrant beauties from the decade that brought us E.T., Indiana Jones, the Walkman and the mix-tape. We're excited to be able to offer them this fall!

- '[Splendid Cornelia](#)' is an Alan Shipp favorite and "a lovely lilac" color.
- '[Fondant](#)' is a sweet pure pink and returns well year after year.
- '[Minos](#)' color varies, depending on conditions and age, from blue through lilac-blue.

...Two Delightful Daffodils...

We trialed a number of classic daffodil varieties this year and fell in love with two in particular. both bred in the Netherlands before 1950 and both contrasting white perianths with orange or scarlet centers. '[La Riante](#)' is somewhat shorter, has a small frilled cup, and blooms early-midseason, while taller '[Doctor Alex Fleming](#)' has a large, exuberantly-ruffled cup and blooms mid-late season. Choose your favorite or plant both to enjoy an extended dance of bright orange and white throughout your spring garden!

...And Dwarf Iris 'Katharine Hodgkins'!

After reading Sarah Raven's new book *A Year Full of Flowers*, we knew we wanted the reticulated iris '[Katharine Hodgkins](#)' to join our Diverse Fall-Planted offerings. Reticulated iris are native to western Asia (including Turkey and Lebanon), are usually under 6" tall and bloom very early in the spring. Their group's name comes from the netted (reticulate) covering of their small dry bulbs, quite different from the thick rhizomes of bearded iris, and includes a number of different species. 'Katharine' is the vigorous hybrid of the pale-yellow flowered *Iris winogradowii* and pale-blue *Iris histriodes* and has flowers that are sky blue with a yellow splash overlaid with lines and dots of dark-blue. Ever since her introduction in 1955, this diminutive and sweetly-scented iris has drawn praise from a wide variety of garden writers, including Canadian Master Gardener and self-proclaimed plantaholic Robert Pavlis who calls her "one of the best" that "makes a great show every year and multiplies quickly to form a good sized clump." Scott Ogden suggests her as one of his Waterwise Plants for Sustainable Gardens while Prince Charles (with Rosemary Verey) included "Katharine" in his organic Cottage Garden at Highgrove. Plant a cluster this fall at the front of a bed or your rock garden to see next spring why '[Katharine Hodgkins](#)' is considered such a valuable part of the early spring garden.

Helping Dahlias Through Hot Summers



Having originated in Mexican and Central American mountain plateaus, dahlias can suffer heat stress in late summer when daytime temperatures are over 90 degrees and nights stay warm. Here at OHG we cover our dahlia rows with weed mat and then straw to keep the ground cool and to help retain moisture. If you are seeing droopy leaves, this can be a sign of stress, not necessarily the need for water. Before we make the decision to water, we dig down 4" to see if the soil is dry. Often, it is still moist. Dahlias prefer deep watering less frequently as opposed to frequent watering which can lead to rot - even this late in the season. Overwatering is a much more common problem than having a dahlia fail due to being too dry. Some southern gardeners will mist foliage in extreme heat to cool the plants, and others find shade cloth that blocks 40% of sunlight to be helpful. And in a recent issue of the *Bulletin of the American Dahlia Society*, Tony Evangelista reports that spraying kaolin clay on dahlia foliage not only protected his plants from insect damage but decreased heat stress as well, since the white clay reflects some of the light before it can heat the leaves. (He notes that for

exhibition varieties he stopped using it a month before showing them.) While we haven't tried it ourselves, we're intrigued, and we'd love to hear what has worked for you this year.

Historic Iris at the Chelsea Garden Show



Congratulations to the British Iris Society whose display celebrating their centenary with heirloom varieties won a gold medal at the 2022 Chelsea Garden show in May! We're happy that two of our favorites were included: Mrs. Horace Darwin and Susan Bliss. For more photos and information, visit <https://www.britisirissociety.org.uk/chelsea-2022/>.

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