

# 2011 at Golden Skep Farm

Dear Gardening Friends,

As we are about to start our 12<sup>th</sup> year, we are reflecting on all of the gardening friends that visited our farm last year. You all make it worthwhile for each day you enrich our lives with all the diversity and unique interests and character each of you possess. Thank you for your loyalty in helping to support what we do here at the farm and likewise to those of you that can't get to our farm but make purchases online or by mail. A special thanks to Jane W. of Northborough, MA who brought us some homemade chocolate chip cookies when she visited. They were g-r-r-reat! And a special thanks to John and Barbara O. of Northborough who gave us a daylily book entitled "Daylilies" by Norman S. Track... we were thrilled to add it to our bookshelves.

For the second year in a row, we gardeners were faced with a challenging growing season. You will recall that the 2009 growing season was unusually cool and wet and for the 2010 season it was hot and dry. Spring in our region was very nice this past year. The months of March, April and May were very warm, breaking records kept in Worcester since 1892. The abundant spring rains and warmth created ideal conditions for wildflower growth in May and June to the extent that at one point our honeybees were bringing in 30-35 pounds of nectar per hive each week. But as the season progressed into July and August, the sultry summer was not kind to gardeners having to plant and weed in 95 – 100 degree temperatures, the honeybees were very agitated as well as the nectar flow had basically stopped and our region's short-lived flower gardens bloomed weeks ahead of schedule. In August, the honeybees were consuming the nectar (which by that time, they had converted to honey) they had harvested in May and June in order to survive. In October, after we harvested a modest honey crop, we started feeding the honeybees a sugar water mixture to assure they would have enough food stores to survive the winter. When we stopped the feeding in mid-November, our six hives had consumed 125 pounds of sugar! We are anxiously awaiting Spring and Summer as we have many new perennial plant varieties to offer our gardening customers and perhaps Mother Nature will provide us and the honeybees with a "Goldilocks" Spring and Summer where the amount of sunshine and rainfall will be just right.

In July 2010, a Special Commission was formed by an Act of the Legislature to designate 1,000 Great Places to Visit in Massachusetts. It's mission was to identify and recognize the 1,000 most truly special places in The Commonwealth in order to celebrate pride in our history and culture, increase knowledge of our natural surroundings and encourage regional and international tourism. We were most pleased and humbled by the fact that the Commission chose Golden Skep Farm as one of the 1,000 Great Places to Visit.

We are constantly on the search for unique and unusual perennials that will do well in New England, are low maintenance and drought-tolerant. So this past year, our focus was on Hellebores – also known as the Christmas Rose and Lenten Rose and they bloom very early in the season. They flower when the weather is cool, they have an exceptionally long bloom time, often flowering in March and their blooms last for months. So, this past summer, we place an order with a couple that has been hybridizing Hellebores since 1982. Each winter, they travel the U. S. and Europe searching for different hellebores to add to their hybridizing

program. The eight varieties of Hellebores that are offered in this year's catalog come in bi-colors, yellow, wine, white, pink, rhubarb/custard and picotee. You will most likely not find these varieties at the big garden centers in the area but only here at the farm.

Once again, Elaine (who always amazes me – but don't tell her I said so) has found several new daylily varieties that we are offering this year, many of which are shown in the color centerfold of this catalog. All of the varieties in the centerfold are available either in pots or in the field and most will have two or more fans. We will also have encore varieties in pots such as Going Bananas. During our 2009 season, we sold out of this lemon-yellow re-blooming daylily. This daylily has 4" flowers and if watered during dry periods, will continuously bloom right into fall. Nosferatu is back again and it is a 6" very sunfast dark purple daylily with a chartreuse throat with ruffled petals. Don't overlook Ruby Spider if you like a large red daylily. The gigantic award-winning daylily is 34" tall with a 9" dark ruby-red flower and a golden yellow throat. For online orders, these and our other potted daylilies can be shipped bare-root.

Last season, we sold out of most varieties of Tall Bearded Iris early in the season so this year, we have expanded the number of varieties offered. It's easy to understand why these stunning flowers are American Iris Society award winners when you view the color photograph sampler located in this catalog. Iris are easy to grow, just go to our website at [www.goldenskepfarm.com](http://www.goldenskepfarm.com) for planting instructions.

Several new hosta varieties are included in the hosta pages of this catalog. This year's offerings will once again include some very unusual and hard-to-find varieties such as Vim and Vigor, a huge (36" tall x 60" across) with shining dark-green leaves that measure up to 20" wide. It produces abundant lavender flowers on tall scapes. Maui Buttercups is a small (10" tall x 18" across) with the brightest gold 5" round leaves that are cupped and corrugated. Of all the gold hostas we have offered over the years, Maui Buttercups is the brightest gold we have seen. Empress Wu, the largest hosta available commercially were sold out by mid-June of last year and is back again this year.

Surely we are known for our extensive daylily and hosta offerings and the word is spreading fast about the nice selection of other perennials that we offer that make for good hardy companion plants with sun loving daylilies and shade loving hosta. When you visit the farm this season, you will notice that our sun loving perennials will be located to the left of our garden shed while partial-shade and shade-loving perennials will be located to the right of the garden shed under a shade cloth canopy. With these two sales areas, we will be able to offer an expanded selection of companion perennials.

This year, starting in the latter part of August until we close on October 10<sup>th</sup>, we will have a nice selection of hardy garden mums, Montauk daisies (they bloom until early November) ornamental cabbage and kale, sedums and many more perennials for your fall planting needs.

**Gardening Tip:** Garden mums should be planted in late summer or early fall in full sun and in well-drained soil. They are heavy feeders but should not be fed more than three times a year except for dwarf cultivars, cut the plants back heavily once or twice to keep compact and to encourage flowering. Don't cut back mums later than August 1 for fall blooms.

**If you plan to walk our daylily gardens, we recommend wearing comfortable walking shoes... no high heels or open shoes/sandals.**

## SPECIAL DATES:

- ❖ **May 7 - 8 Tax Free Mother's Day Weekend.** You pay no MA Sales Tax on all purchases and save 6.25% - we'll pay the tax for you.
- ❖ **June 8 - 12 – Hosta Heaven Days** – Large selection of plants to choose from and 10% off on all hosta.
- ❖ **June 18 - 19 Tax Free Father's Day Weekend.** You pay no MA Sales Tax on all purchases and save 6.25% - we'll pay the tax for you.
- ❖ **July 16 - 17 – Annual Daylily Celebration** will be held at the Farm from 10AM to 5PM each day – thousands of daylily plants will be at peak bloom for your viewing pleasure. Free refreshments. Door Prizes to be given away on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- ❖ **July 24 - The New England Daylily Society (NEDS)** will be having a judged daylily exhibition at Tower Hill Botanic Garden, 11 French Drive, Boylston, MA. Daylilies at Golden Skep Farm will be in bloom at this time so stop by the Farm after the exhibition. We are only four miles from Tower Hill.
- ❖ **August 13 – 14 Daylily Sale Weekend** at the Farm

**GARDEN SHED:** Our own honey will be available for sale again this year along with other beeswax products, Honey Toasted Sunflower Seeds, Peanuts, Cashews and Pecans IN SIX OUNCE JARS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE. All the nuts are TOASTED, not roasted, with a kiss of honey. Less, oil, less fat, less sodium and fewer calories. Stained reproduction Nantucket basket wall/door pockets, iron garden towers, tinware and assorted colorful ceramic planters, Elaine's beautiful lavender wands and an assortment of colorful hand-glazed porcelain flower vases. There is more but we'll stop now so that when you visit the Garden Shed, you will find other surprises there as well. We all enjoy being pleasantly surprised!

**Organic Compost and Mulch:** As in the past, organic compost, mulch and Espoma Organic Traditions products will be available at the farm to help in making your garden a success.

Our goal has always been to provide our customers with quality plants, personal service and an enjoyable experience when visiting our Circa 1740 farmstead. We are available to provide you with one-on-one gardening advice to help you succeed in your garden. Whether you are a first-time gardener or one that is getting "crusty" like us, we can all learn something new. Hope to see all of you at the Farm this season. Meanwhile, you may visit us on our website at [www.goldenskepfarm.com](http://www.goldenskepfarm.com) where you will find more photographs of the daylilies we have in our garden. You can also contact us at 978-838-2471 or via e-mail at [info@goldenskepfarm.com](mailto:info@goldenskepfarm.com).

Happy Gardening!

*Elaine & Carl*



**We accept American Express, MasterCard, Visa,  
personal checks and of course, cash.**

**NEW HOURS:** From May 4 through October 10, we will be open **Wednesday through Sunday and holiday Mondays from 10:00 AM through 5:00 PM.**  
**NOW OPEN THRU COLUMBUS DAY !**

**Gift Certificates:** Be nice to Someone or Two – The joy of giving, or the even greater joy of receiving a Golden Skep Farm Gift Certificate. Gift certificates are available at the Farm in denominations of \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$100. Makes a great gift for that gardening relative or friend. Gift Certificates may be purchased year round ~ just contact us by phone or e-mail when you need a birthday, Christmas or other "event" Certificate.

**ATTENTION GARDEN CLUBS, PHOTO AND ART CLUBS:** Looking for a new venue to hold your monthly meeting? Consider meeting at Golden Skep Farm because during the growing season, our gardens explode with color!

**ATTENTION: MEMBERS of WCHS:** Upon presenting proof of membership to WCHS Tower Hill Botanic Garden at the time of purchase of any plant material, you will be entitled to a 10% discount. Offer expires October 10, 2011 and may not be combined with other offers.

**HOW TO FIND US:** From Rte 495 north or south: take Exit 26 for Rte 62 west towards Berlin Center (approximately 2 miles)... at caution light, go left onto Linden Street. Farm is located approximately 1.5 miles from the Berlin Municipal Center... we are on the left hand side. From Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston: Take a left exiting the gate and go just a little way and take your first left onto Linden Street... the Farm is approximately 4 miles away and will be on your right hand side immediately after Ball Hill Road. (Once on Linden Street, ignore the house numbers as Linden Street in Boylston turns into Linden Street in Berlin and the numbers start going the other way – so just clock the four miles on your odometer.) From Solomon Pond Mall (just 4 miles): Upon leaving Donald Lynch Boulevard, take a right at the lights; upon entering the rotary, take second right onto South Street; bear left onto South Street at the fork near the Berlin Post Office on the right. At the stop sign at the end of South Street, go left onto Linden Street; from this point, we are just 1.5 miles on the left hand side. (Look for our Farm sign) From the Highlands Commons Mall: Upon leaving the mall, take a left onto Rte 62 and head west towards Berlin Center at the caution light, go left onto Linden Street. The farm is located approximately 1.5 miles from the Berlin Municipal Center.

**MAKE A DAY OF IT IN BERLIN !** In addition to Golden Skep Farm, our small and beautiful town of Berlin has several small businesses and farms that can make for a very pleasurable summer day spent in town after visiting Golden Skep. Some of the businesses are: **ART:** Silver Buffalo Gallery, Two Crows Studio; **CAFÉ:** Berlin Farms; **HAND CRAFTS:** North Brook Farm and Mill, Old Goat Folk Art, Wood'N'Things; **RIDING LESSONS:** Maplewood Farms, Orchard Hills Equestrian Center; **MARKET GARDEN STORES:** Berlin Farms, Balance Rock Farm, and Indian Head Farm; **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Martin Miller; **LUNCH AND/OR DINNER:** Lowe's Variety (General Store), The Flat Penny Restaurant; **MUSIC:** Mockingbird Music Company. Inquire about these businesses when at the farm – many of them are listed on our website.

Although not located within Berlin's town limits, the Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston is an amazing spot located just four miles from the Farm. \$2 off admission coupons to Tower Hill are available at the farm while supplies last.

We will be glad to give you directions to these establishments when you are at the farm.