



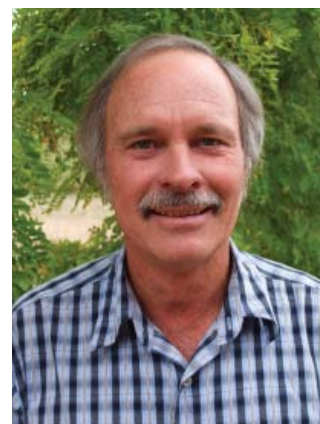
hortie

What Do Your Plants Say About You?

Our Hortie for this month is a rare plant person indeed. Burl Mostul from Rare Plant Research (<http://retail.rareplantresearch.com/home.php>) is a plant lover to the umpteenth degree. But his past had him moving in a different direction. Burl grew up to be an intellectual and not someone you would find working in the soil. His education and background is as a Clinical Psychologist. It was an encounter with bonsai plants as a graduate student that gave him the bug for different and unusual plants. His first house became a home to a small Japanese style garden, but his desire for plants, specifically unusual plants only grew. He started propagating his plants to get more of the ones he liked and he opened a small nursery in 1987 with a photocopied plant list.



The nursery really started to grow in the late 1990's as Burl found markets for lewisia and then hardy bananas. Cindy, his wife, would use her free time away from her other job to show plants to prospective buyers and Burl would come home from his work as a psychologist to work on propagating and growing these unique plants. As Burl found more of these unusual plants he became interested in the scientific uses of these plants and would do research and write articles on them, hence the name of his nursery, 'Rare Plant Research'. Today Burl and his wife grow over 100 different types of plants which you can find at some local nurseries and his growing operation in Oregon City. He never thought he would be successful in growing and selling plants; he just wanted to find cool and unusual plants! He has now quit his practice and is devoting all of his time to growing these wonderful plants.



Being a psychologist Burl found that plants can elicit different responses in people. He found that different plants can change your mood and behavior. For example, are you an introvert or an extrovert? Introverts are those people that hang out in the background; they almost fade into the woodwork. Extroverts are the life of the party. They are hard to miss in a crowded room. Plants are like that. You can have introverted or extroverted plants and even gardens. Introverted plants, like their human counterparts are nondescript and can be easily overlooked. In fact you can have an entire garden of introverts. Burl mentioned the Japanese garden as an example of a garden full of introverts. They create a background of uniformity when seen from a distance. Walking through an introverted garden is almost like walking through a library. You almost find yourself whispering as you walk among the plants. The plants seem to be wall flowers, until you get up close. Then they become exciting with character traits all their own.



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What Do Your Plants Say About You?....*continued*

Extroverted plants are full of brilliant color and texture. They scream out at you in the garden, demanding attention. Burl says the tropical garden is the best example of a garden full of extroverts. If they don't grab you with their color they use their fragrance to draw you in. He has found that you can love both and both will draw different feelings out of different gardeners. With both, you can walk through your garden and use the design of a garden to help calm you down or pump yourself up. Burl even cited studies that have been done on horticultural therapy with people in hospitals. When they see plants and work with plants they get better faster. Burl finds that gardening can be like a combination of art and beauty, becoming food for your soul.



But if you ask Burl what his favorite plant is he is stumped. Whether it is a simple plant that has leaves that hug the ground or the fantastic colors of some exotic bulb, he has found a warm spot in his heart and his garden for them both. He is in the process of putting together a book on these ideas.

Burl is also confident in the future of gardening. In these current economic times, people have been driven back to their gardens to grow vegetables and relax, and the word 'staycation' has become popular. This is creating a new breed of gardeners as they are finding plants to love and new reasons to garden. Also, as people spend more time on computers and in offices, they will look for ways to relax and reconnect with their surroundings. Gardening can do that and it's cheaper than therapy! His advice to the new gardener, follow your feeling. How does the plant make you feel? Burl says to buy the plants that make you feel good. You will enjoy them longer and you will be more active in their care, plus you will find yourself being drawn to them and away from your worries and stresses.

So the psychologist in Burl wants to know; what type of garden do you have? Is it an extrovert or an introvert? For 'professional' help you can check out Burl's plants at his website or at your local independent garden center.