



*Polemonium 'Heaven Scent'*

**EDUCATION:**

Bachelor of Science from Oregon State University.

**BREEDING GOALS:**

- For *Polemonium* — more red-leaved varieties with different flower colors and better longevity in the garden.
- For *Geum* — reflowering, longer lived, more adaptable plants with an expanded color palette.
- For *Allium* — new forms, foliage and sterility are of special interest.
- For *Salvia* — new leaf colors (rusty and red), white flowers.

**BIGGEST INFLUENCES:**

Lajos Horvath, George Radtke, Roy Diblik, Roy Klehm, Terry Smith and Alan Bloom.

**ADVICE:**

“Breed with your own seedlings and introductions. You’ll have an advantage. Work with species that aren’t dominant in the trade. Find at least one large nursery to work with to bring your plants to market.”

**FOR MORE:**

Brent Horvath, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, (815) 648-2788; [www.intrinsicperennialgardens.com](http://www.intrinsicperennialgardens.com).

## BRENT HORVATH / INTRINSIC PERENNIAL GARDENS

By Jyme Mariani

Many of the up-and-comers in horticulture credit their success to their roots. Such is the case with Brent Horvath, who is president of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens Inc. in Hebron, Ill.

Horvath is quick to name his father Lajos Horvath as one of his horticultural mentors. “I grew up in the green industry working for my Mom and Dad at their garden center, landscaping company and florist,” Horvath said.

Horvath’s family influence continued to be important and led him to take horticulture classes in high school. “Luckily, it was easy for me,” Horvath said.

**A PLETHORA OF PLANTS**

Since he started in the industry, Horvath has done a lot of breeding and crossing work on perennials. He has selected, bred and introduced cultivars from many genera to the trade, including *Allium*, *Geum*, *Pennisetum*, *Penstemon*, *Polemonium* and *Sedum*. He has four plant patents and three pending.



*Sedum 'Lajos'*

“I like a lot of different plants,” he said. He mentions grasses, daylilies, polemoniums, geums and sedums by name.

“Daylilies ... are easy, and we are working on real specific goals, including black-stemmed flowers and extremely short ones.” He’s also working on a pink and yellow bicolor daylily.

Horvath’s goal is to license plants to whomever wants them. He’s not big on marketing his plants as U.S. exclusives.

As far as names go, Horvath puts thought into the plant’s moniker. “We have stopped using trade names for our plants since most companies are not using them right by creating nonsensical variety names, which is not the ‘correct way’ to name plants,” Horvath said.

“They only make things more confusing, by giving plants more than one name.”

Horvath’s perfect plant would be ever-flowering and reliable with an easy-to-culture habit. It would also long-lasting in the garden. “A lot of plants coming into the market are just marginal when it comes to market performance,” he said.

Fragrance is another top selling point, Horvath said. Plants that attract wildlife are also popular.

Horvath prefers plants with impact. He doesn’t think a plant’s height should be a negative when it comes to breeding. “It’s a sad fact that a lot of breeding is for plants that fit in a rack and ship well,” Horvath said.

In the long term, he hopes that “plants are tested longer before being introduced.”



Brent Horvath. Photos courtesy of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens

**SEDUM**

Brent Horvath found 'Lajos,' a sport from 'Autumn Joy,' at a local perennial grower in 1997. It's named for Brent's dad, who was Hungarian. The trade name is Autumn Charm. Foliage is creamy-yellow edged. It's a slower grower due to variegation. 'Beka' has chartreuse-yellow leaves with a thin green edge. It's a sport of 'Lajos' with the vigor of 'Autumn Joy.' 'Beka' means "frog" in Hungarian and was Brent's dad's affectionate name for Brent's mother. The plant's trade name is Autumn Delight. Both plants have red flowers.

**PENNISETUM ALOPECUROIDES**

'Red Head' is a seedling selection Brent made from 'National Arboretum,' which Harlan Hamernick of Bluebird introduced. Most red-flowered pennisetums bloom in October in Northern Illinois and sometimes the frost hits before, which stops flowering. "I found 'Red Head' blooming in September. I put it in our office gardens and watched it for a year or two," Brent said. Once mature, it has a commanding presence reaching 4 feet tall and wide. The flowers are extra big, too. This plant has great retail appeal and is the first Intrinsic introduction that many local competitors have started growing, Brent said.

**SALVIA ELEGANS**

'Golden Delicious' is a golden-leaved sport of pineapple sage. "It's one of the most adaptable plants you will find, which is one of the reasons it was picked up as a Proven Selection perennial by Proven Winners," Brent said. Bright-yellow, fragrant foliage smells like

pineapples and looks good from spring to fall. It has red flowers in October that attract hummingbirds. It's drought tolerant but loves moist or even wet soil.

**POLEMONIUM**

'Heaven Scent' is a sterile hybrid with grape-scented blue flowers beginning in May and lasting into June. Plants reach 18-24 inches tall and emerge with red new growth that holds on into June. The foliage is pinnately compound and has a ferny texture. Plants have performed well in full sun and will tolerate part shade. Well-drained soil is best.

**GEUM x 'TEQUILA SUNRISE'**

This is the second member in Intrinsic Perennial Gardens' Cocktail series. It has lemony-yellow petals tipped in rose. The buds and top part of the stems are chocolatey red while the blooms are mostly semi-double with some singles mixed in. Plants reach 18-24 inches tall and start flowering in May lasting at least a month. They prefer full sun with moist to well-drained soil. The foliage is semi-evergreen on clumping plants. ★

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SOME OF HORVATH'S INTRODUCTIONS