

With their heavy evergreen leaves, hellebores are drought-resistant and long-lived.



Drought And Deer-Resistant Flowers

"They're 100% deer resistant," was all Barry Glick of Sunshine Farms and Gardens needed to hear when he asked about hellebores after seeing one blossom in the snow. After losing hundreds of plants to the local deer herd, he promptly ordered all the hellebores his supplier had.

"He sent me more than 30 plants," recalls Glick. "Today I have six acres of them. They thrive anywhere from Florida to Maine and southern California to the Pacific Northwest. They prefer rich, moist soil with good drainage, part to full shade, and can be grown in virtually every state."

Glick quickly began checking with other

suppliers in the U.K., Germany, Belgium, and even Australia. He learned that hellebores originated in the Balkans. There are 19 different species, each with its own specific color.

As he collected multiple individual species, he began hand-pollinating flowers with a #8 camel hair brush. He might transfer pollen from a red to a white and a white to a yellow. Each time he obtained a variation, he gathered the seed and grew it out. Creating the hybrids didn't happen overnight.

"It takes three to five years to go from seed to a flowering plant," says Glick. "I had all the plants in a heated greenhouse, tagged them

with a number, and then recorded the cross, such as 1 to 7, and then backcross 11 with 7."

Glick explains that other commercially available hellebores come from inbred, self-sown seedlings dug up from beneath existing plants. He says they lack the brilliant color and hybrid vigor of hand-pollinated hellebores.

It's now been over three decades of hellebore cultivation and hybridization. At one time, he had a mechanized system capable of handling nearly 290 seeds at a time. Today, he spreads 9 grams (about 677 seeds) in germination pots. About half sprout in the first year, and the other half in the following year. By January, there'll be at least 300 plants in each pot. He transplants seedlings into 2-in. pots and sells them.

He and his workers also dig up 20 to 30-year-old plants from the 6 acres.

"We hose all the soil off, divide the roots up, plant them in 5-in. pots, and sell them," he says.

The 2-in. pots sell for \$5 each in groups of seven. The price drops as the quantity ordered increases. The price for the 5-in. pots is available upon request.

Glick's Sunshine Farms and Gardens claims a plant list of 10,000 different, hardy to zone 5 perennials, bulbs, trees and shrubs from around the world. He cultivates them on his 60-acre mountaintop farm at 3,000-ft. elevation. Many are in commercial

production and ready for sale, while others are available for custom propagation. It's mainly a wholesale nursery, but Glick also offers limited mail-order options for retail customers.

Hellebores remain the main focus of breeding. He maintains over 50,000 flowering-size stock plants. Being ignored by deer isn't the only reason they're popular. Most of his current customers are cut flower growers. With their heavy evergreen leaves, hellebores are also very drought-resistant and long-lasting.

"They can live for more than 100 years," says Glick. "They just get bigger and bigger every year."

He calls his six acres of hellebores his happy place, especially during the February through May bloom.

"We see peak bloom March to April," he says. "There are no weeds up, just the hellebore leaves on the ground and the blossoms above them. It's an amazing scene."

Glick offers individual and group tours of his gardens by appointment only. Besides the hellebores, he has 2 acres that are 95% native plants.

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Spelt Offers Flavor-Packed Substitute For Baking

Spelt, an ancient wheat variety, is gaining popularity due to its versatility and bold flavor. Although spelt flour contains gluten, it's generally easier to tolerate than regular wheat and has the advantage of not significantly impacting blood sugar levels. While baking with it yields results similar to all-purpose flour, spelt offers an extra depth of flavor. Some people describe spelt as having a tangy note, similar to yogurt. It also has a slight saltiness, which adds complexity to its flavor profile.

Spelt's lower gluten content can make breads slightly denser. Still, it's valued in pie crusts, yeast breads, sourdough, pizza, muffins, cookies, and as a breading for fried foods. The flour tends to be on the fluffy side, so it's best to use 1 1/4 cups for every cup

called for in a recipe. The flour should sit in liquid for 5 to 10 min. before use.

Many bakers buy spelt berries in bulk to grind at home. Others grow their own. Spelt isn't a commercial crop, due to relatively low yields and the need for specialty harvesting equipment. Still, it's possible to grow the berries at home in zones 3a-8b.

Plant the berries at the same time you plant winter wheat and care for them accordingly. Spelt requires less nitrogen per acre than wheat and is ready to harvest when the tops are dry, brown and crunchy. Cut the stalks, bundle them, and winnow by beating the heads into a clean, lined trash can or bucket. Toss the wheat into the air in front of a fan to blow away the chaff while the heavier wheat sinks. Freeze the grain for two weeks before

eating if you're concerned about bugs.

Spelt berries can also be sprouted. This process further reduces the gluten content and increases the availability of vitamins and minerals. To sprout them, soak the berries overnight in warm water. Drain and then place the berries in a container with a breathable lid. Keep them in a dark cabinet, and rinse twice daily. You can eat the sprouts once the berries double in size. Use them wet or dry in a dehydrator, then grind into flour. The overall flavor is similar to a sweet malt.

Like other whole-grain flours, spelt includes the bran, endosperm and germ. It's more prone to going rancid than all-purpose flour. Store your spelt in the refrigerator if you plan to keep it for longer than a few weeks.



Some say spelt has a tangy flavor, like yogurt. It also has a hint of saltiness, which adds complexity to the flavor profile.

Museum Features Family Tractor Collection

By Lydia Noyes, Contributing Editor

The Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering, Neb., features stunning views of Scotts Bluff National Monument, an 80-acre working farm, and a remarkable collection of pioneer artifacts.

"The Museum was created in 2013 with the merger of the North Platte Valley Museum and the Farm and Ranch Museum (FARM)," says museum representative Dave Wolf. "The Krejci Collection is a great story and a wonderful addition to our museum."

Wolf shares that the North Platte Valley Museum was founded in 1961 with a mission to focus on the history of the North Platte Valley, especially focusing on Native Americans, emigrant trails, early settlements, and the cattle industry.

FARM aims to preserve regional farming implements and equipment. The mission has expanded to include farming practices, irrigation, crops and research. FARM features a farmstead, a blacksmith shop, a maintenance shop, and more. The collection of over 1,000 items spans more than 2,000 years of human life in the North Platte Valley, making it a valuable resource for historians, agronomists, scientists and visitors alike.

"The joining of the two museums makes us a one-stop shop for anyone interested in history," Wolf says.

The Krejci tractor collection adds to the displays. The 34-tractor collection features John Deere, Minneapolis-Moline, Allis-Chalmers, Ford, Avery, Farmall, Massey-Harris, Co-op, and an Oliver, along with a Superior grain drill by Oliver.

"George and Belva Krejci farmed east of Hemingford, Neb.," Wolf says. "Restoring tractors was their winter project. George would get them running and painted, and Belva would then help with the detailed paint jobs and decals."

George Krejci operated the restored tractors in parades and hosted tours for those interested in seeing them.

"He asked us if we would like to have them several years ago," Wolf says. "We didn't have the building to keep them out of the weather. After George passed, the family approached us again, and we agreed to take them in."

Today, the collection is on display in the Museum's tractor shed.

"All of them are together, and we are hoping to have identification signs on them soon."

But there's still more to explore once visitors have their fill of tractors.

"We receive compliments on several of our artifacts and exhibits," Wolf says. "Our



Krejci's 34-tractor collection includes John Deere, Minneapolis-Moline, Allis-Chalmers, Ford, Avery, Farmall, Massey-Harris, Co-op, and Oliver.

clothing, tractors, houses, home life, quilts and videos all get rave reviews."

The Japanese Hall/Community Center has become an unexpected crowd favorite.

"Built in 1929, it served the Japanese American community until 2019 and was moved to our campus in June of 2024. It's a great exhibit and testament to one of the cultures that helped build our area."

The Museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Legacy of the Plains Museum, 2930 Old Oregon Trail, Gering, Neb. 69341 (ph 308-436-1989; info@legacyoftheplains.org; www.legacyoftheplains.org).