



Fall, 2007

Dear Friends,

I find nothing more satisfying than leaving the nursery after a full day of potting; my clothes smeared with dirt and hands stained deep brown from humus. It's a horticultural badge of honor and tangible proof that I have personally helped a few thousand more young plants on their journey to adulthood. As another summer comes to a close and the fields and greenhouses here at Nasami Farm are overflowing with plants, I feel a touch of sadness that for the first time this year, there is no dirt under my fingernails to prove I had a real hand in their making. Though I have spent my summer writing, teaching about, studying and photographing native plants, I still feel a visceral pride when I look out over the acres of beautiful native species reaching maturity at Nasami farm. I feel pride in the staff that has worked so hard to bring another growing season to a successful close and truly proud of the plants themselves. Thirty minutes strolling around the nursery at this time of year will convince even the most diehard skeptic that native plants not only make sense, they are really beautiful.

Though my fingers are clean, they are certainly sore after typing all summer to finish the third volume in the Society's native plant reference series, *Native Ferns, Moss and Grasses*. The final edits are done and it will be off to press shortly (look for it early in 2008). Speaking of grasses, late summer and fall are the high season for many of our native bunchgrasses. For a dramatic transition from summer to fall, I especially like little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) – both of which turn autumnal shades of orange in sunny, impoverished soil. Panic grass (*Panicum virgatum*) is another late season stalwart, and there are a number of excellent garden selections. Two favorites are 'Northwind,' with a stiff shape and gray leaves that mellow yellow in September, and 'Dallas Blues,' a six-foot specimen with a fountain-like shape and blue leaves topped with effervescent sprays of burgundy seeds at this time of year. Though prairie dropseed gets lost in the snow, the other two can brave winter's worst, standing tall, tan and proud though snow, wind, and ice. I hope you will stop by this fall during our expanded retail season to enjoy our plants and take a few grasses, wildflowers, ferns, shrubs, trees, and vines home. Please don't worry if there is a little dirt under your nails!

William Cullina
Horticultural Research Director