

## **Joan Sargent's Garden Bed**

**October 1996** by Joan Sargent

There seems to be a lot of interest lately in little bulbs, especially tulips. My favourite American Garden writer, the late Louise Beebe Wilder, in her book "Adventures with Hardy Bulbs" wrote in 1936 most eloquently and interestingly about them. She said, "success with them is by no means a foregone conclusion." I second that, but of those that I have tried, some have lasted ten years -- good drainage, a baking in the summer sun and no tall foliage hanging over them would be the ideal bedding. The lovely *Tulipa Dasystemon* is yellow-centered with white star-like blooms, four or five flowers per stem, six inches tall in April. *Saxatilis* is a lilac as is *Bakerii*. *Batalina Bright gem* is a buttery yellow and *Unifolia* a bright red. There are more than two dozen varieties listed in most catalogs.

"The Avant Gardener" says in this month's issue that crushed oyster shells (available from Garden Way) planted with the bulbs dramatically reduces rodent damage. I think I'll give it a try this year. Those interested in Louise Beebe Wilder can get her book entitled "Hardy Bulbs" in paper edition published by Dover Press.

## **Joan Sargent In Praise of Mail Order**

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My fall orders are all in the mail and I expect yours are too. I have long advocated, ever propounded the wisdom of ordering bulbs by mail. This is Peony planting, Poppy planting, Rose and Lily planting time, too. All of these I order from long established specialists. The selection is far greater, prices often fairer and the quality better than anything I can find locally. I send small trial orders to new nurseries. This fall I couldn't resist trying "Old House Gardens", the first and only source for antique bulbs. In the spring Plant Delights Nursery was my best new find. It has not escaped my attention that some of the star performers this dry and hot summer--*Helianthus*, Lemon Queen and *Indigofera*-- originally came via UPS from distant states. Should you like a list of those nurseries that have found special favor with me and with the caveat 'Let the Buyer Beware', send me a self-addressed stamped envelope.



Indigofera, or True Indigo is a shrub.

*Helianthus divaricatus* is a sunflower, this variety is a very tall grower. Tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions. Spreads over time by creeping rhizomes to form colonies. Divide every 3-4 years to control spread and maintain vigor.