

VALE'S GREENHOUSE



Quality Plants For The Chinook Zone

301 – 3rd St. N.W., Black Diamond, Alberta

933-4814

PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR 2010

Baptisia Australis Purple Smoke

[Blue Wild Indigo](#), [Blue False Indigo](#), [Rattle Bush](#)



Every year the Perennial Plant Association sends each member a ballot to select a Perennial Plant of the Year. These plants do not tend to be new introductions to the garden world, but plants that have been tried and thus proven worthy for nomination. After the selection, the plant is then promoted all across Canada and continental U.S.A. Here, in the Black Diamond and Calgary area, there have been years that the plant chosen has not been hardy to our Agricultural Zone of 2 or 3.

This tough plant is a native through much of the central and eastern U.S.A. and is most common in the Midwest. North American Indian tribes discovered the uses of this plant long before settlers arrived; the flowers provided a source of blue dye and the roots were ground into a tea which was drunk to treat toothaches and nausea, a practice later copied by Europeans. This plant is now well known to gardeners for its attractive pea-like, deep blue flowers that emerge on spikes in the early summer. The

oblong seedpods are popular in flower arrangements and may have caused the name “Rattle Bush” to become another popular name.

Baptisia is extremely hardy in Zone 2 and requires little maintenance. It has now been introduced well beyond its natural range, which means it is now found in gardens around the world. Attractive light green compounded leaves form a 3 foot tall, bushy clump of grey-green foliage, with long flower spikes in shades of violet-blue. This plant belongs to the pea or legume family and is known to be a nitrogen fixer (taking nitrogen from the air and putting it down into the ground for the roots to use). Baptisia is easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun. Plants develop slowly into expanding clumps with deep and extensive root systems, and should not be disturbed once established. Whether grown from seed or transplanted into the garden, it will take several years to establish, eventually becoming a lush, full and stunning plant.

For more information on the Perennial Plant Association, and past Selections for the Perennial Plant of the Year, check their web site at www.perennialplant.org.