

**Yard and Garden – 05-25-2013 - Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant**

Normally it takes three hours. This time we did it just under a record- breaking seven hours. I'll explain shortly.

I don't know about you, but spring is my favorite time of the year. Everywhere, greenhouses are brimming with new and exciting plants. At this time of year, I've often thought I should have a sign attached to my car warning others, "Caution! This car stops at every greenhouse."

Two weekends ago Rita and I made our annual pilgrimage to Tilden to celebrate Mother's Day with Rita's mom and dad. If no stops are made, we can usually make the trip from Minden to Tilden in slightly less than three hours. The return trip always takes longer. As a matter of fact, this year our return trip took nearly four hours longer.

Since Mother's Day always coincides with spring planting, Rita and I have always made it a point to stop numerous times on our return trip. Over the years, we've mapped out our homeward journey so our travels take us through a number of towns—especially those that have greenhouses. Over the years, these many stops have netted for me some of my favorite plants. A few include tree peonies, intersectional peonies, bonfire begonia and bird's nest fern.

This time, when we reached the outskirts of Fullerton, I stopped by a local convenience store and asked the clerk if Fullerton had a greenhouse. For whatever reason, in years past, I had never made such an inquiry. Much to my joy, I was told of a



greenhouse called Fancy Plants. With great anticipation, I secured the directions and off we drove.

A few years ago, a client stopped by my office with a sprig of a most unusual, beautiful blooming plant for identification. Having never seen such a specimen, I had to do a little research before I could

provide her with a positive ID. It was then I knew that if ever I came across one of these

jewels for sale, I'd buy it. At Fancy Plants it happened. One is now gracing our deck with its beauty.

The plant is commonly called a bleeding heart vine. Unrelated to the bleeding heart called *Dicentra spectabilis*, this plant's genus species is *Clerodendrum thomsonia*.

Bleeding heart vine has been described as one of the most spectacular blooming vines. When in bloom, the plant is adorned with rich crimson-red corolla flowers peeking from white, balloon-like calyxes. The flower's appearance resembles a line of dangling hearts, each emerging from the other— thus perhaps the common name.



Bleeding heart vine blooms from spring through summer with the blossom count diminishing as fall approaches. In its native habitat, the vine goes through a dormant period in the winter. This plant is a vining evergreen, capable of reaching twelve to fifteen feet in length. Growing in a container, it is expected to reach only three to four feet.

Bleeding heart vine has smooth, forest-green foliage, oval in shape and approximately six inches in length. It performs best in full to partial sun tolerating a minimum temperature of 55°F. Originating in western Africa, this plant is tropical in nature. It is only hardy in Zones 10 through 12 and will not survive Nebraska's winters. Knowing this, I must grow mine as an annual or take it indoors for the winter and treat it as a houseplant. It propagates easily from cuttings.

As I began, normally it takes about three hours. Should we return to Tilden this Memorial Day, I'm positive it will again take three hours. However, on our trip home, who knows? It could take more than seven hours. After all — it is still spring planting time.