

Hort Report February 11, 2020

by Sunny McGeorge

It's February, the ground is not frozen, so I was able to dig this clump of *Liriope spicata* to bring this morning. It is still green, and looks grass-like, but it is not a grass. It also is not a lily, as it's common name, lilyturf, would indicate. It is now classified as being in the asparagus family! This plant is named for Liriope, a Greek woodland nymph, mother of Narcissus. *Spicata* means spike-bearing.

*Liriope* grows very well under trees, even Maples, as mine does. I have it on a slope, as it is very good for erosion control. It grows by rhizomes, and so spreads easily. It should be divided regularly, but I have never divided mine, and it does just fine. The fine, strap-like leaves grow about 15" tall, and white to lavender flowers emerge in the late summer, often hidden in the dense foliage. More prominent are the black berries that emerge when the foliage has wilted a bit in the fall. In a harsher, more normal winter, the foliage would be more brown by now.

*Liriope* likes to be cut to the ground in late winter before the new foliage emerges, but if it's not cut back, the new foliage will eventually cover the old foliage, and it will look great. Our hostess, Diane Mateson, is going to divide this clump and plant it on the slope behind her house. I know it will do as well for her on her shady slope as it does for me.