



Garden Talk!

for the Heartland Garden Enthusiast

October 2003

What's Inside

- **Flowers for the Fall Landscape**
- **Garden N' Grow**
- **Harvesting Pumpkins**
- **Master Gardeners attend State Conference**
- **Plant Profile**
- **October Gardening Tips**
- **Upcoming Events**



Shrubs for Fall Interest

By: Sarah Saltmarsh, Kirksville Area Master Gardener

Fall is just around the corner. As the days get cooler, we begin to think of all the wonderful things that fall has in store for us. Harvest time brings us bright red and gold apples, deep orange pumpkins, and gourds of all colors. The trees will soon be sharing the beautiful colors that they have hidden under their green color all summer. While we often think of tree color and interest in the fall, we seldom give much thought to shrubs for fall color. Many shrubs are available for fall interest. Here are just a few:



Baileys compact cranberry bush (*Viburnum trilobum*) has spectacular deep red fall color. This shrub grow to 5ft. tall and wide. The branches are upright and have opposite 3-lobed leaves that are 2 to 5" long. The white lacecap flowers are borne midspring and are followed by red berries. This shrub is hardy in zones 2 through 7.

For reddish purple fall color, Henry's Garnet sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) is the one you want. This shrub grows to 5 feet tall and wide. It is easy to grow in both sun and shade. It also tolerates wet or dry soil. The white flowers are 2 to 6" long and appear in June. This shrub is hardy in zones 5 to 9 in the eastern half of the country.

Turning a rich burgundy in the fall, the oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) is one of the most beautiful shrubs we have. The 3 to 8" long leaves remain on the shrub well into fall. The flowers are long panicles that start out white and gradually turn a dusty pink. The peeling bark provides added interest. This shrub prefers moist, acid, organic soil. It will tolerate sun or partial shade. It grows 4 to 6 feet tall and wide. This shrub is hardy in zones 5 to 9.

Goldflame spirea (*Spirea japonica*) gives us a parade of color all season long, ending with a bronze-red color in the fall. This is a smaller shrub, growing 2 to 3 feet tall and wide. The small flowers are pink and tend to clash with the leaf color. This shrub is hardy in zones 4 to 8.

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You can find current and past issues of Garden Talk at <http://outreach.missouri.edu/adair/horticulture/gardentalk.htm>

GARDEN N' GROW

By: Anniessa Wray, 2003
Garden N' Grow Participant

In Garden N' Grow I learned many things. To list them all would take up pages. For the most part I made new friends and this was a very interesting and enjoyable experience for me.

One of the many techniques I learned was how deep and how far apart I should plant my seeds or transplants. I learned how many harvesting days Missouri has and the bugs that infest our plants. I learned what plants some of the bugs are attracted to and how to tell when bugs are present. You can tell this mainly by eggs, holes, and bug droppings. A big clue is the bug itself! I learned many plant diseases and how they affect the plant. I learned how to make veggie salsa, pizza, fried zucchini, and fried squash blooms. I learned how hot peppers are depending on the pepper, and the hottest part of the pepper. I learned to make a pot lady, a bean tepee, and a three sister's garden. I learned to fertilize, weed, and how to tell when you should harvest different plants. I also learned so much more!

I feel the Garden N' Grow program should keep going. Others could learn from the experience.



Flowers for the Fall Landscape



The Chrysanthemum: The chrysanthemum, also called a mum, is considered the queen of fall flowers. The plants, generally from 12 to 24 inches tall, are covered with colorful blooms. They require a well-drained soil with ample water and fertilizer. Tip cuttings of old plants root very quickly and provide relatively disease-free plants. Cuttings of 6 to 8 inches, stuck half their length into sand or a sand and peat mixture will usually root in 8 to 10 days. Old clumps can also be divided at this time. It is best to complete transplanting in June or early July. Keep terminal buds pinched through July to promote side branching. Garden mums are better for landscape use than florist mums.

Pansies: As the leaves begin falling, and our flowers start to fade away, many gardeners put their gardens to bed for the winter months. The idea of months without flowers seems a waste, especially when we can have an outstanding display of color from pansies all winter long. So instead of ending your gardening for the year, begin your winter gardening with a planting of pansies.



Pansies, *Viola X Wittrockiana*, come in a variety of sizes, colors and types. They come in blues, reds, yellows, white, orange, pink and purple. There is even a black variety. There are solid colors without faces, to bi-colors with contrasting faces, to blended colors, giving you a mix of colors in each bloom. Intense breeding has developed flowers that can get as large as four and a half inches across, on lovely green foliage. It is hard to believe that these large, brightly colored flowers are descendants of the quiet, diminutive woodland violets. Pansies thrive in cool weather, and will bloom for you from now until hot weather causes them to decline next summer. Plant them in a well-drained location with moderately rich soil. They will grow in full sun to partial shade. Those in full sun will fade away sooner in the summer, but by then you have plenty of other plants to replace them with. Pansies can be planted from late September through November. When planting late in the season, be sure to choose strong, healthy plants with blooms or at least buds on them. If you plant young, small plants during the later planting, you may wait until spring for good flowers.

Pansies also make ideal container plantings. If you live in an apartment or condominium, don't think that you are excluded from planting pansies. Plant a container full for your deck, patio or front porch. Regular watering will need to be included in their care—even when it is cold. It is especially important prior to a heavy freeze. They don't need to be saturated, but they do need to be moist.

Fertilize pansies regularly all season long. Fertilize at planting and during any warm spell throughout the winter. They respond well to blood meal, but several gardeners have also attracted wild animals to their pansy plantings by using it. If you want to use blood meal, incorporate it into the soil lightly. Be careful not to be too heavy handed, since it is a high nitrogen fertilizer. Any commercial fertilizer will work well also.

Very few pests attack pansies, with the main culprit being the rabbit, and occasionally squirrels. Pansies are not only a wonderful bedding plant, but are also edible as well. They are used in salads, and are crystallized and used as decoration on cakes. If you decide to nibble on your pansies, make sure that they have not been sprayed with any pesticides before doing so.

Information obtained from the University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service

HARVESTING PUMPKINS



One of the most popular fall crops is the pumpkin. Pumpkins are carved into jack-o-lanterns and are used as a Halloween decoration in October and are used in cornucopias and for Thanksgiving decorations in November. They are used to make pies and other delicious desserts.

To ensure a long life, pumpkins must be harvested and stored properly. Pumpkins should be left on the vine until the desired color is reached. Once the pumpkin is picked, the color stops developing. Pumpkins can remain on the vine until a light frost. A light frost will not damage the pumpkins themselves, but may kill the vine. All mature pumpkins should be harvested before temperatures drop into the mid to low 20's. Green, immature pumpkins will not turn orange after a killing frost.

You can tell if a pumpkin is ripe by thumping it and examining its skin. If it makes a hollow sound when thumped, it is ready to be picked. It is ripe when the skin feels hard, almost like a shell.

When harvesting pumpkins use a sharp knife or scissors to cut the fruit from the vine. Leave several inches of stem attached to each fruit. Pumpkins with stems are less likely to rot. Do not carry pumpkins by their stems. The stems may not be able to support all the weight and may break off.

After harvest, pumpkins should be cured for 10 days at 80-85 degrees with 75-80% relative humidity. Curing helps heal wounds, enhances color, and ensures a longer post-harvest life. After curing, store the pumpkins in a cool, dry place. Storage temperatures should be 50-55 degrees. They should be placed in single layers where they don't touch one another. Good air circulation helps prevent moisture from forming on the surfaces of the fruit and retards the growth of decay fungi and bacteria. Remove any discard any pumpkins that show signs of decay. Pumpkins can be stored for two to three months. Pumpkins that are properly harvested, cured, and stored should be in good condition for Halloween and for use in fall decorating.



Master Gardeners Attend State Conference

During the weekend of September 5-7, 2003 about 35 Master Gardeners from Northeast Missouri attend the State Master Gardener Conference in St. Louis. They joined 250 other Master Gardeners from around the state for a weekend of garden tours, garden sessions, and fun. Dr. Allen Armitage, professor of horticulture at the University of Georgia, was the keynote speaker Friday evening. He spoke about using perennials in the landscape. All day Saturday MG's went on tours around the St. Louis area. Some of the tours included the rooftop garden at the St. Louis Children's Hospital, private home tours, an organic produce farm, the Jewel Box and

Forest Park, the St. Louis zoo, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and many more. Saturday evening MG's got to see a monarch butterfly release and enjoy a bountiful feast at Forest Park. Sunday morning everyone attended informational garden sessions. The conference concluded with a luncheon and closing remarks. The 2004 Master Gardener Conference will be held in Columbia, September 17-19.

PLANT PROFILE: Flowering Kale

Other Common Names: Flowering Cabbage

Scientific Name: *Brassica oleracea*

Life Cycle: annual

Leaf Color: outer leaves are blue-gray or green-bronze; inner leaves are rose, pink, purple, white, yellow; leaf color usually intensifies after a light fall frost

Planting Time: Fall

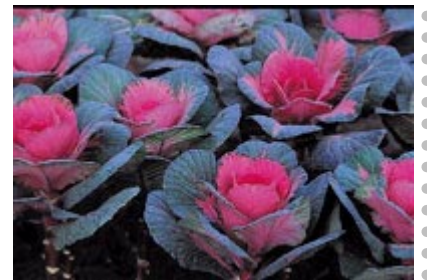
Size: 6-12 inches

Culture: well-drained soil; likes organic matter; full sun to part sun; do not over water

Propagation: can be started from seed in late spring; chilling the seed for 3 days prior to planting may help germination.

Landscape Uses: used in borders or group plantings, containers, and window boxes

Disease & Insect Susceptibility: aphids and slugs



GARDENING TIPS FOR OCTOBER

ORNAMENTALS

- Plant spring bulb flowers.
- Continue watering, especially evergreens if soils are dry.
- Container grown and balled & burlapped trees and shrubs can be planted. Loosen the soil in an area 5 times the diameter of the root ball before planting. Mulch well after watering.
- For best bloom this winter, Christmas Cactus, potted azaleas, and kalanchoe may be left outdoors until night temperatures drop to about 40 degrees.
- Cannas and dahlias can be dug when frost nips their foliage. Allow plants to dry in an airy, frost-free place before storage.
- Spring bulbs for forcing can be potted up now and stored in a cool, frost-free place until it is time to bring indoors, usually for 12-15 weeks.
- Transplant deciduous trees after they have dropped their leaves.

FRUIT

- Persimmons start to ripen, especially after frost.
- Monitor fruit plantings for mouse activity and take steps for their own control if present.
- Place wire guards around trunks of young fruit trees for protection against mice and rabbits.

VEGETABLES

- Continue harvesting tender crops before frost.
- Harvest winter squash and pumpkins before frost.
- Dig sweet potatoes before a hard freeze.
- Gourds should be harvested
- Sow cover crops such as winter rye after crops are harvested.

TURFGRASS

- Seeding should be finished by October 15.
- Broadleaf herbicides can be applied now to control cool season weeds such as chickweed and dandelion.
- Continue mowing lawns until growth stops.
- Keep leaves raked off grass to prevent smothering grass.
- Now is a good time to apply lime if soil tests indicate the need.
- Winterize lawn mowers before storage.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Week 1-Fall color begins
- Week 3-Begin peak fall color in maples, hickories, and oaks.
- Week 4-End of peak fall color.



Upcoming Events

October 4: Field day at Blue Heron Orchard-Dan Kelly of Canton; Blue Heron Orchard is an organic apple orchard and produce farm. They were recently awarded a Sustainable Agriculture Demonstrations Grant to build a straw bale storage room.

October 31: State Master Gardener Board Meeting, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Agriculture Building, University of Missouri, Columbia; all Master Gardeners are welcome to attend as guests. Only board members are allowed to vote.

Happy Halloween



Garden Talk!

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