

Horticulture Hints

September 2009

Flowers for Fall

After a summer of vibrant color, fall is known for its subtle shades; rusts and oranges, yellows and purples. To continue this display of color in your landscape, include some of the following fall blooming flowers.

The most popular fall blooming flower is the **chrysanthemum**. The mum was first cultivated in China as a flowering herb and is described in writings as early as the 15th century B.C. The boiled roots were used as a headache remedy, young sprouts and petals were eaten in salads and the leaves were brewed for a festive drink.

There are seven basic flower forms commonly found in garden mums: anemone, button, daisy, decorative, pompon and spider.

Mums are "photoperiodic"; meaning, they bloom in response to the shorter days and longer nights experienced in fall. Therefore, do not plant mums near street lights or other night lights. Also, don't overcrowd mums; good air circulation reduces the chance of disease.

Plant mums in full sun and well-drained soil that has been enriched with cotton burr compost. Fertilize once per month and pinch back the plants through July.

"Pinching" simply means removing the tips of new growth. This yields compact, bushy plants with more blooms. Start in the spring when the new growth has reached 4 to 6 inches in length.

Thereafter, every 2 to 3 weeks, pinch the center out of any more growth when it reaches 6". Stop pinching mums the 4th of July to assure the best blooms for fall.

Mums benefit from winter protection, so mulch with 2 to 3 inches of material. Don't prune in fall, as existing branches offer the roots protection. Finally, divide mums every third spring to rejuvenate them.

Tall sedums are extremely hardy, easy to grow and provide excellent fall color. Pick a well-drained, sunny spot; they cannot tolerate heavy, wet soils. Keep sedum pinched back to maintain a fuller plant.

Some varieties, such as Autumn Joy, can be cut back almost to the ground if they get too floppy and will come back fuller and firmer.

Divide every few years by digging the entire clump in the spring when it first emerges and cut into smaller pieces and replant each section.

Do not over-fertilize tall sedums; they will grow too fast and fall apart. Some great varieties to choose from are 'Autumn Fire', 'Mr Goodbud' and 'Brilliant.'

Asters are another great fall bloomer. They should be planted in moist well-drained soil in full sun, but they will tolerate light shading.

Clumps will need to be divided every 3 to 4 years in the early spring or late fall after the flowering has finished. Keep pinched back as you would a mum.

'Purple Dome' is a dwarf cultivar that typically grows 18 to 24 inches tall and up to 3 feet wide with a low, bushy habit. This plant has dark purple flowers which can entirely cover the plant with bloom from mid-August until early October. Asters are very attractive to butterflies.

Helenium (also called sneezeweed) has a flower that looks like a small russet-toned cone-flower in reds, yellows and oranges. Many he-

What to do in September

- FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO PLANT!
- Seed lawns - this is the best time of the year to overseed or start a new lawn
- Plant trees, shrubs, iris, peonies, mums and other perennials
- Select bulbs now for the best selection
- Choose a new houseplant to liven up your home or office
- Fertilize established lawns with fertilome Lawn Food + Iron
- Continue fertilizing annuals
- Mark your calendars for Fall Field Days: October 10th



Flowers for Fall, cont.

lenium can grow quite tall and will need to be staked or pinched. Like clematis, they like cool feet and hot heads. They are great for late summer to early fall color.

Goldenrod has a bad reputation among people who think it causes fall allergies when, in fact, ragweed, the real culprit, is blooming at the same time. Goldenrod provides great bright yellow fall color and is very hardy.

'Baby Gold' is a nice upright variety with large sprays of tiny, bright gold flowers. Dead-head to keep it looking neat. This plant prefers poor to average, well-drained soil and reaches about 30 inches tall.

Blue Mist Spirea is one of the few true blue blooming shrubs around. Treat it as a woody perennial and cut back to about 8 to 10 inches tall in the winter or early spring.

Their leaves are late to come out in the spring, so don't panic if you don't see foliage right away.

Blue mist is a mounding, deciduous shrub that is drought tolerant and showcases a compact form, gray-green leaves and spectacular deep blue flowers in late summer and fall. It prefers a well drained, sunny dry site and can grow to 3 to 5 feet tall.

Another plant with similar form but a bit taller is **Russian sage**. They both look great combined with rudbeckia, coneflowers and ornamental grasses.

False sunflower, or Heliopsis, has 2 to 3 inches golden yellow flowers that bloom from early summer to early fall. It grows 2 feet tall in

light shade and can be up to 6 feet tall in full sun, and it does best in average, well-drained, moist garden soil. This hardy perennial tolerates drought but grows faster in fertile soil. Heliopsis has a long-blooming flower, great for the cutting garden.

Joe Pye Weed 'Gateway' grows 5 to 6 feet tall. It has late summer/early fall flowers that are mauve-rose with dark purple stems; a beautiful color combination.

It prefers full sun and moist conditions, which makes it a great perennial for soggy areas. The flowers attract hordes of butterflies and are good cut.

'Little Joe Pye Weed' stays a bit shorter if you want a more compact shorter plant in the garden and the 'Chocolate Joe Pye Weed' has chocolate foliage all through the year.

These are only a few of the many flowers to choose from to extend your blooming into the late fall. Also, don't forget the pansies and flowering cabbage for your tired containers. ❁

Blueville Nursery's annual

Fall Field Days

Saturday, October 10

PURPLE PRIDE SALE

Saturday, September 27

All day: 8am-5pm

**25% off everything purple
in the Garden Store**

Sale applies to Garden Store purchases on sale day only.

