

Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 3

Fall Edition

September 2002

Parting is such Sweet Sorrow

Here we are on the threshold of saying good bye to another glorious growing season. Oh, how I dread the thought of cold weather & snow! Alas, time marches on & the seasons will change as they may.

Autumn does however bring with it blessings of vibrant color & feelings of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. On page 3 you'll find helpful "how-to" tips that will help you enjoy both *beauty*, in "Backyard Boquets & bounty in the "Baked Apple" recipe. Speaking of vibrant color, "A is for Aster" on page 4 offers you some choices, both tall & small when planning to add them to your perennial border. Fall is also the time to plan ahead for spring. Be sure to get all spring flowering bulbs in the ground now. Don't keep leftovers in the basement, garage or shed as this could seriously inhibit the bulb from sprouting next year. Well, till next issue, I'll enjoy each & every warm day we have left....you should too!



Flower Power

A recent behavioral study conducted at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, revealed that nature provides us with a simple way to improve emotional health, flowers. According to the study, the presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightening feelings of life & satisfaction. The study, conducted with the cooperation of the Society of American Florists (SAF), adds a scientific foundation to what many consider to be common knowledge—that flowers have a strong, beneficial impact on those who receive them. Study participants expressed "true" or "excited" smiles upon receiving flowers, demonstrating extraordinary delight and gratitude. The SAF study also noted that people reported feeling less depressed, anxious, and agitated after receiving a gift of flowers. The study also explored where people display flowers in the home. They were most often placed in areas open to visitors, such as foyers, living rooms, and dining rooms.

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Autumn Crocus

Written by Justin Hancock

This unique plant pops up out of nowhere each autumn. *Colchicum* is a small, crocus-like plant that bears pink, lavender, or white flowers in the autumn when other plants are slowing down. Although its lance-shaped leaves appear in spring right along with the foliage of spring-flowering bulbs, its flowers don't appear until fall-when they seem to pop out of the ground almost overnight. Here's what you need to know to grow this little-known plant.....

Plant At A Glance

Botanical Name: *Colchicum autumnale*

Common Name: Autumn Crocus, or
Meadow Saffron

Family: Liliaceae (*lily family*)

Origin: Native of Europe

Height: 4 to 6 inches

Zones: 4 to 9

Description: *Colchicum*'s fleshy foliage appears in early spring, but fades in the summer so there's no sign of the plant until its 6-inch flowers appear in the autumn. *Colchicum* looks like a crocus, though the two are not closely related.

Growing conditions: *Colchicum* prefers full sun with moist, well-drained soil. In summer, plant the bulb-like corms 3 to 4 inches deep. *Colchicums* aren't particularly drought resistant, so water them regularly if it's dry. Consistently wet soil, however, will cause the corms to rot. Many gardeners like to naturalize *Colchicums* by planting them randomly in the lawn. This

is a wonderful treatment if you can wait to mow your lawn until the foliage has died back completely in the summer. (If you mow the foliage before it dies back on its own, the corms may not flower in autumn.) One alternative is interplanting them with a ground cover such as periwinkle, where mowing isn't required. You can also plant *colchicum* in pots or bowls with pebbles, much as you'd do with paper-white narcissus.

Care: Because the plants show no foliage in summer and autumn, mark their location so you don't accidentally dig them up while working in your garden. Since the flowers appear at ground level, it's a good idea to plant them close to walkways or other areas where you can see them easily.

Choices: You can choose from a large number of selections and related species. 'Waterlily' is a double-flowering cultivar and 'The Giant' has especially large flowers. Rose-colored 'Autumn Queen' is fragrant.

Cautions: This plant is quite poisonous, so keep it away from children or pets. Too much contact with the corms or the foliage can trigger skin irritation.

Sources:

Brent & Becky's Bulbs

7463 Heath Trail, Gloucester, VA 23061

877-661-2852

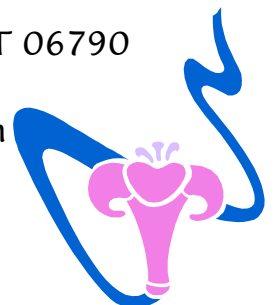
www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com

White Flower Farm

PO Box 50, Torrington, CT 06790

800-503-9624

www.whiteflowerfarm.com



Backyard Bouquets

Why not use a pumpkin as a container to show off the last of your garden's fall splendor? This simple yet showy arrangement looks great from all sides.

You'll need:

Large Pumpkin

Chrysanthemums (*in mixed colors*)

Flower Spikes of Ornamental Grasses

Seedheads of Sedum 'Autumn Joy,'

1. Cut flowers early in the day and condition them in deep water in a cool place.
2. Cut top off and remove seeds & strings from inside of pumpkin. Clean and apply a coat of varnish to outside and allow to dry.
3. Insert a wide-mouthed jar filled with water; set pumpkin on a platter to protect table from water marks.
4. Arrange mums in jar using long-stemmed blooms to give height in the middle, shorter ones to fill in.
5. Insert grasses and sedum seed-heads as accents and to give the bouquet a loose, airy look.

Tips: If the stems won't stay put, insert a ball of scrunched chicken wire to support them. To add extra pizzazz, surround the pumpkin with varnished ornamental gourds, crimson fall leaves, and sprays of decorative berries.

-Ruth Rogers Clausen

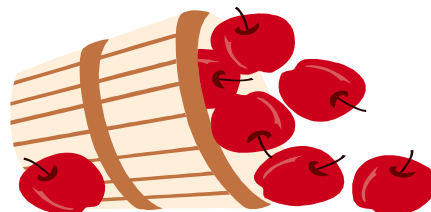


Baked Apples

'Golden Delicious', 'Granny Smith', 'Jonathan,' & 'McIntosh' apples work well in this autumn classic because they hold their shape and retain their flavor when baked.

- 4 medium baking apples
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons raisins, dried cranberries, or dried fruit bits
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts (*optional*)
- 1/4 cup rum or apple juice
- Sweetened whipped cream
- Ground nutmeg (*optional*)

PREHEAT oven to 375. To core apples, use an apple corer or the rounded tip of a vegetable peeler. Push corer or peeler most of the way through the apple center, but do not cut through the other end; turn corer or peeler to loosen the upper part of the core. Remove and discard core. Enlarge hole slightly at top of the apple for filling. Remove the peel from the top half of each apple. If desired, use tines of a fork to score peeled portion of apple. PLACE apples in ungreased 2-quart square baking dish. For filling, combine brown sugar and butter; stir in raisins, dried cranberries, or fruit bits, and, if desired, walnuts. Spoon some filling firmly into center of each apple. Drizzle some rum or apple juice over each apple. Bake, covered in the oven about 40 minutes or till tender. Serve warm with whipped cream. Sprinkle with nutmeg, if desired. Makes 4 servings.



A is for Aster & Autumn

Asters promise a surefire visual feast in any garden. Give them a sunny spot and plenty of water, and get set for a fall banquet of pastel pink and bold purple blooms. Some asters open as early as July, and others bow out of the garden as late as November. Asters grow all across North America in almost any garden environment—borders, rock gardens, stream banks, and dry sites. Some varieties grow tall, others remain short, but asters can always be distinguished by their daisy-like flower heads. Try the compact *Aster amellus* for early blooming, *Aster tataricus* for midautumn blooming, and *Aster edcoides* for long-lasting blooms into late autumn.

Doing Any Fall Cleaning?



Hospices of Henry Ford
Needs Your Help

to continue the

2002 "Butterfly Bouquet" Bud Vase Drive

Hospices of Henry Ford has an ongoing program to collect new or used bud vases to create "Butterfly Bouquets" to cheer hospice patients. The staff does this in cooperation with the generosity of local florists who donate the flowers, & **people like you** who donate the vases. This program has been a blessing to many patients in their final days.

*Your Bud Vase Donations
Are Greatly Needed & Appreciated!*

All donations can be dropped off at:
260 Union Street, Plymouth MI 48170
or

call (734) 354 - 3372 with questions

Pretty Faces for Cool Weather



Pansies are one of my favorite cool weather plants. Their faces grace frosty fall mornings with boldness, reminding me that it's not over till it's over!

Gardener Gatherings

Places to Go & Things to Learn



What & Where

Growing Connections 2002
Organic Harvest Festival
at Kensington Metro Park
September 14th 9:30-6:00
call Lisa Wesala at 248-828-8494
for more information & directions

"Bedding Down for Winter"
Plymouth Public Library
October 5th 10:00 AM
call **734-453-0750** for directions &
information

Detroit News
Fall Perennial Ex-Change
September 21
9:00 to 11:00 AM
at all **English Gardens** locations
check the yellow pages for a store near you
or call **313-222-2571** for more info

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or earthenjoy@att.net