



Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 3

Fall Edition

September 2006



Fun with Fall Foliage

Fall is the best time for decorating organically. Using natural elements such as pressed leaves is a great way to savor the colors and beauty of this season. They're perfect for decorating greeting cards, thank you notes and all types of stationery. Anyone who receives a pressed leaf card will think twice before throwing it away. Other items that lend themselves to being decorated with pressed leaves are: photo albums, scrapbooks, candles, lampshades, and picture frames. A collage of richly colored leaves themselves, convey warmth and interest when displayed in a handsome frame. You can also dress up small glass jars with pressed leaves for simple "fall theme" votive holders.

How To:

To straighten (curled leaves) or press (flatten) leaves, simply place them in between paper towels and iron on a cool to medium setting.

Here's a few fun and easy projects you can do with your pressed leaves:

PICTURE FRAME PROJECT

Colorful Autumn Leaves

Picture Frame (with WIDE border to affix



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leaves to)

Glue

Construction or specialty paper

Mount one (or more) leaf(s) to a piece of construction paper small enough to fit inside picture frame. Insert leaf and paper into frame. You can also glue the leaves to the outside of the frame for a more three dimensional look. Hang on a wall among other pictures or display on a decorative shelf with other fall theme items.



CIRCLE OF LEAVES

Straw wreath

Freshly fallen leaves

Stick pins or glue

(use glue if doing this project with young children)

Bow (optional)

Wide Trailing Ribbon (optional)

Using stick pins or glue, attach leaves overlapping them as you work your way around straw wreath. You can add trailing ribbon and a bow if desired. You could also glue leaves directly onto wide trailing ribbon for added interest.



Plant Profile:

Butterfly

Bushes



If ever a plant was virtually guaranteed to attract butterflies, it's a butterfly bush. Sometimes called orange-eye, or summer lilac, this colorful shrub with its clusters of bright nectar-filled flowers also attracts bumble bees, moths, hummingbirds and songbirds. It's an absolute favorite of gardeners who

grow plants that attract birds and butterflies. Native to western China, butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is named after Pere David, a missionary and naturalist. He discovered it while exploring China in the late 19th century. Over the years, butterfly bush has gained popularity in the United States. Now there are almost 40 varieties being grown by American nurseries.

Shoots and Roots

In the northern and central United States, butterfly bush is considered "root-hardy", not "top-hardy". This means plants may die back to the ground, but will grow again each year from the roots. Since it blooms on new growth, losing shoots to frost or a harsh winter does not affect its flowering ability. Just to be safe, you can mulch heavily to protect the roots from harsh winters. If the shoots survive the winter, they should be pruned to within 6 inches of the ground to promote strong new growth and more flowering in **SPRING**. Pruning in fall is **NOT** good. I did this once and suffered the consequences. That particular fall it stayed warm, so my bush flushed out with new growth. Then suddenly it got cold and froze the new leaves. The next season the poor thing struggled terribly and I thought for sure I killed it. The following year I pruned it correctly and it grew like crazy, reaching over 10 feet! Butterfly bushes do grow fast, and can get tall, so they work well at the back of a perennial bed for great fall color.

Butterfly Blossoms

From July and into fall, the branch ends produce fragrant flowers. These long, triangular, dense 4 to 10 inch clusters make any yard a butterfly's dream come true. The flowers can be white, pink, red or lilac-colored with an orange center, depending on the variety. Cut off spent blooms and you'll be rewarded with a bush that flowers the rest of the season. There are many types and colors to choose

BIRD WATCH:

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH



Goldfinches are one of the most amazing songbirds of Michigan. The male goldfinch is a striking summer sight with his bright yellow feathers, bold black cap, and black wings barred with white. Though less spectacular, the female sports an elegant olive yellow color. Goldfinches are easy to attract to your yard by hanging out feeders filled with their favorite seed (thistle), or planting seed bearing perennials such as purple cone flower.

LISTEN: for a lively *chew-chew-chew* triplet of notes when the birds are flying, and a happy *per-chik-oreee* when it's feeding.

LOOK: for goldfinches' undulating, up and down, rollercoaster flight pattern. These birds often travel in groups. Their flight speed is anywhere between 19 & 30 MPH.

ATTRACT: goldfinches by hanging feeders filled with thistle seed. Planting perennial cone flowers, lavender seed heads or annual sunflowers and leaving them up through the fall is a sure bet they'll come to your garden. Also, it's important to offer plenty of water year round.

FINCH FACTS: female goldfinches don't build their nests until July and August. The reason for this is that goldfinches' are seed eaters, and their food supply isn't readily available until mid summer. They have one brood (4 to 6 eggs) of babies a year, and the eggs are pale blue. Males molt (shed their feathers) before winter and turn the same olive color as the females.



No spring,
nor summer beauty
hath such grace,
as I have seen
in one Autumnal face
—John Donne

Gardener Gatherings

Places to Go & Things to Learn

What & Where

FREE PLANTS! FREE PLANTS!

Novi's Fall Perennial Exchange

September 23rd 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

at the Novi Civic Center

call **248-347-0400** for directions & info



Tollgate Fall Fair

September 16th 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

at MSU Tollgate Gardens

call **248-347-3860** for directions & info

(SEE INCLUDED INSERT)!



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