



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

Recommended Cultivars:

Royal Red (my FAVORITE) offers fragrant reddish-purple flowers.

Nanho Blue sports lilac/blue flowers.

Bicolor a newer variety with a color mix of butterscotch yellow and raspberry lavender. Has a sweet fragrance.

White Bouquet is popular offering dense growth smothered in fragrant white clusters.

Pink Delight a compact variety with fragrant medium-pink flowers

Nanho Purple has bright purple flowers and nice fragrance

Give It Room

Most butterfly bushes are easy to grow. They need full sun (at least 6 hours), well-drained soil, enough water to maintain growth and plenty of room. As mentioned above they can get 10 feet tall and will spread at least (some will go more) 5 feet wide. The bush's fragrant flowers are at their best in late summer and have a magnetic effect on butterflies. Butterflies seem to choose the flowers nectar over any other garden plant. The leaves have been known to stay attractive long after the first light frost. My shrubs keep their silver green leaves and seed heads (I stop deadheading in September) all winter. They provide cover and food for birds. No doubt about it, butterfly bushes **DEFINITELY** live up to their name.

(Photos below in order of above listing)



Birdhouse Care: Fall Cleaning

Most birds will raise several families during the spring and summer. In the fall, after nesting has ended, you should clean out your birdhouse. It prevents insect grubs, potential disease and mold spores from germinating, thus ensuring better health for the new baby birds next spring. After fall cleaning if you do leave the house up over the winter, you will need to repeat this same cleaning procedure in early spring before the next mating season gets underway.

What to Do:

- Clear out & discard the old nest
- Scrape off any debris with a stiff brush
- Hose out the house using an antibacterial soap, or mild bleach and water solution and left dry thoroughly
- Make any necessary repairs
- Place clean dry grass or straw in the house to allow for roosting shelter from bad winter weather



Winter Storage: If you are using wooden houses, they will definitely last longer stored indoors over the winter. Therefore its best to use a mounting system that permits easy installation and removal each season.

Interior Preparation Tricks: Some songbirds such as chickadees and woodpeckers like a house to be filled with wood chips or sawdust so they can sort of "dig out" their own cavity. Also, a good optional protective measure is to sprinkle a bit of diatomaceous earth (an insecticide available at garden centers) on the bottom of a new birdhouse or in a newly cleaned house. Birds are not the tidiest of housekeepers and fledglings can generate an amazing amount of droppings both in and around the nest. These droppings encourage insect grubs to thrive, which presents a health danger to the fledglings. Diatomaceous earth, while perfectly safe for the birds, scratches the carapace of the grubs and causes them to dehydrate and die.

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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