

Autumn gardening

By Jenny Jorgensen

Summer may be coming to an end, but fall brings with it a new season of opportunity. Color changes and new focal points are just waiting to happen. Exciting new gardening projects are filling our thoughts. The weather is cooler and it is a pleasant time to be outside. You know what we nursery-folks say: "Fall is for planting."

Do you know why we say that? Well, fall is one of the best times to plant new things because the weather is cooler; therefore, there is less stress on the plant. There is more natural rainfall so the plant stays better hydrated. The plant is already in growing mode and will move right into the planting hole and continue to grow. Sometimes in the spring, a plant has to wait for the earth to warm up before it comes out of dormancy and starts to grow again. So think of fall as "opportunity knocking"!

Are you anxious to keep your vegetable garden going? Now is the time to plan for fall veggies and herbs. Lettuce, broccoli and cabbage starts are available and you can use seeds for starting root crops like carrots and beets. It's also time to plant garlic for harvest next spring.

Maybe you'd rather plant a cover crop in your vegetable garden to provide next year's crop with green compost? Plant it now, till it up or turn it under in the spring. You can get a variety of cover crops at the garden center. Remember the gardeners' golden rule: Good dirt equals good harvest.

How about those planters? Are they looking tired? Or, are you just tired of looking at them? Well, it's time to freshen them up or start over. Here again lies a wonderful opportunity to change out color schemes and try some new fall themes.

There are still many beautiful blooming chrysanthemums and asters available at the garden center right now. And of course winter pansies fill the tables. Choose from a rainbow of colors to plant in your planters and fill your garden beds. There are also ornamental cabbages and kales, which are very hardy and will live through our winter.

To add longevity to your planters it's always a good idea to put in some evergreen plants of interest. There are so many to choose from; you will be hard-pressed to choose just two or three. There are coral bells (one of my favorites) that come in lime greens, silvers, greens with purple veins, shades of peach, coral and even black. They blend so well with everything that your planters will become a work of art. Other evergreen perennials you could use would be hebes, heathers, bergenias and ferns. They provide a medium-height layer to your planter and work well as a filler. Ornamental grasses come in many different heights, colors and shapes. They could be used to trail over the edge of a pot, add interest as a focal point or filler, as well as to add height.

One more tip to make your planter tru-

ly an original is to put a personal treasure in, maybe a bird, a mouse or a scarecrow. Something special, like you! Think about proportion though. Will it be hidden when your planter grows a bit? How about a little birdbath? There again, you can find unique things like this at the garden center.

So, don't be sad that summer is over. Be glad that you have a chance to do something else in the garden besides watering and dead-heading annuals.

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