



### **Fall-flowering Plants Gary Westlake**

I suspect that many of you have caught yourself thinking “Will this garden season ever end?” We have only just recently had a little frost but nothing thorough yet. But I regret when the snow actually falls, because there are some plants that wait until the end of the season to put on a show. It is a great idea to plant some of these in your garden so that you can have a bit of colour this time of year.

I few years ago we planted some fall crocus (*Colchicum*). They are just finished but put on a great show this fall and the clumps are getting larger. These mauve-coloured beauties grow leaves all summer and flower later after the leaves have all died away.

We also have a couple of clumps of a fall-blooming variety of Monkshood (*Aconitum*). They are still blooming now and this plant stands tall like a Delphinium. Ours tends to flop a bit and really should be staked. Please be advised that this plant is very toxic and you should be careful handling it.

One of my favourite fall bloomers is the Toad lily (*Tricyrtis*). You have to go looking for it in our garden because it does not put on a huge display. Up close, it has the most striking looking flowers with bumps on the bottom and specks of colour over a white background. They are called Toad lilies because the bumps remind you of the warts on a toad. It is great to have these little flowers among the falling leaves.

Our fairy rose, that forms a carpet of pink in our garden for most of the summer, is still blooming and will continue till frost. You can start new plants from this easy to grow, hardy rose by holding a branch down with a brick, letting it root and cutting the new plant off.

Deadheading of roses through the summer is a good idea to extend the bloom but near the end of the season, leave a few flowers for the bright red hips which will stay on later and give you some colour. If the flowers get unsightly, you can take off the petals without removing the whole thing. *Rosa rubrifolia* is a great one for hips.

We have a line of seven good sized planters on our balcony where for years we have planted petunias. This year we decided to try geraniums. We planted one plant of a red Rocky Mountain variety in each

and they have bloomed non-stop all summer and still look better than ever. All we have had to do is deadhead and water sparingly. I would highly recommend these to anyone who wants a show that lasts until late in the year and without having to fuss with their containers. Be warned that this variety of geranium is huge and you don't need many.

We got a great variegated variety of Impatiens from a friend that continues until frost. It is a single-flowered heritage variety that has not had the height bred out of it. We take cuttings of it every year and plant it again in pots the following spring.

In the last few years, the garden centres have been offering annuals late in the year for you to replace the plants in your containers to get a fall display. This goes beyond the traditional mums to include new varieties of flowering kale and a number of other interesting plants.

Of course, this is the time that the large sedums flower. One of the strongest of these is the variety Autumn Joy. We either leave these up in the garden through the winter or cut and dry them for use in pots for the winter.

Our warm-season ornamental grasses are blooming now as well. You must grow at least *Miscanthus* with its feathery plumes and large clumps of leaves that move in the wind. There are a number of great varieties and they stay up all winter giving a great display in the snow. Also commonly grown, are the Feather Reed grass Karl Foerster and the Switchgrass, Heavy Metal. All are great choices for a fall garden but be patient because they take a few years to reach their full size.

So I guess the outdoor gardening season is not over until we are up to our earlobes in snow again. In the meantime there are lots of late-bloomers left to enjoy.

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