

Season Standout Flowers And Vegetables

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

South Dakota Master Gardeners met in Yankton in September for their annual update and were asked to share about their outstanding flower or vegetable from this past season or maybe share a tip. Here are their edited responses.

- Heirloom gladiolus. Sue W. White of Northern Hills Master Gardeners said that she had great fun with her heirloom gladiolus this year, including Green Lace (1961), Starface (1960), Atom (1946), G. callianthus Abyssian Glad (1888) and G. nanus Elvira (1956). She enjoyed their grace and beauty so much that she plans to send for more varieties next spring (Old-housegardens.com). She also enjoys their history. The Abyssinian glad is a rare fragrant one, and its shape is different than most. It was discovered and collected from the mountains of Ethiopia in 1844, reaching America by 1888.

- "Luscious Berry Blend" Lantana (Proven Winner). Arlene Bramdt-Jenson of Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners in Watertown area said that they are gorgeous red/orange/yellow flowers that are long blooming, have a nice shape, and if they wilt they bounce back after watering.

- Onion plants from Dixon Dale Farms, according to Mel Glover of Pennington County Master Gardeners in the Rapid City area.

- Artichokes. Sheila Hillberry of Pennington County Master Gardeners said that she got one plant as a gift and it did well and produced three artichokes and is still going after a frost. Next time I will plant several and will not cage them. Plants get big.

- "Georgia Jet" Sweet Potatoes. Joe Hillberry of Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area said that nothing tastes better than fresh sweet potatoes.

- "Sugar Snax" Carrots. Kris Rausch of Prairie Potters in Gettysburg said that these carrots are long (15'-24"), slim, and very flavorful. She grows them in a raised bed.

- Roses. Tamra Glover of Pennington County Master Gardeners of Rapid City said that her roses have been gorgeous because they had rain and the weather has been a bit cooler. Great vegetables. Leeks, corn, and peppers have been wonderful, but tomatoes not so much.

- Blue Fountain Delphinium. Jean Koupal of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners of the Yankton area said that this bold colored flower blooms all summer. In fact, it is now October and it is still blooming! These beautiful blooms add a touch of grace to her garden and make a wonderful bouquet of cut flowers that last up to seven days in a vase.

- Yellow wax beans. Jean Koupal of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners of the Yankton area said that they are delectable buttery flavor and great for freezing.

- Wave Purple or Lavender Petunia. Rick Koupal of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners of the Yankton area said that the spectacular low-growing, spreading habit makes this flower an award-winning series for our flower planters. They produce masses of flowers all season without having to trim them back.

- Garden Sweet Burpless Hybrid Cucumber. Rick Koupal of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners



Kim Marie Weimer of Pennington County Master Gardeners is a fan of water-wise 'Sunset Hyssop' Agastache, a late season bloomer that is tolerant of many soil conditions.

PHOTO: KIM MARIE WEIMER

of the Yankton area said that this vigorous plant resists downy and powdery mildew, which contributes to its generous yields over the season. This cucumber is perfect for slicing and is bitter and burp free. The best tip for planting cucumbers is to plant vertically. This year I put up a cattle panel arch and this has dramatically increased our yield because the vines receive better air circulation and more sunlight, and less back bending.

- Pink Oxheart Heirloom Tomatoes. Cris Freiwald of GRRO Master Gardeners of Milbank said that they have great vigor, size and flavor.

- Tulips. Bob Puffer of Fall River Master Gardeners said that they come up early in the spring ahead of every other plant and look pretty. His are red. They do well in our mostly dry summers because they come up early. They come from bulbs so they do not need to be replanted each year.

- Verbena. Donna Adrian of South Central Master Gardeners of the Long Valley, Norris, Murdo, Draper, Winner, Rosebud, and Mission area said that it bloomed all summer, rooted down as it spread, and is still blooming October 15th.

- Lantana. Donna Adrian of South Central Master Gardeners of the Long Valley, Norris, Murdo, Draper, Winner, Rosebud, and Mission area said that it has good coloring throughout the season and is very drought tolerant.
- Spaghetti squash. Diane Sather of the Minnehaha Master Gardeners of the Sioux Falls area said that this vegetable is healthy, can be used in place of pasta, and she has so many recipes that she needs to try.

- Black Krim heirloom tomatoes. Lyn Steen of Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area said that they are exceptionally sweet, hardy, and prolific. They ripened early and gave fruit all season.

- Cylindra Beets. Theresa Nordin of Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area said that these beets grow very well and are wonderful for making salads uniform.

- "New Orange" Petunia from Burpees. Theresa Nordin of Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area said that they grew well from seed and are still blooming riotously on October 15th.

- Amaranths. Shirley Masteller is a Master Gardener, not in a club, whose favorite gets about 3 ft tall and adds dark red spikes to the landscape in fall.

- Tartarian asters (Aster tataricus). Jim Heisinger of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners of the Yankton area saw Painted Lady butterflies feeding on the last of his seven aster species still in bloom. He says that lots of pollinators appreciate this late-blooming non-native perennial.

- Potatoes. Jim Heisinger of Missouri Valley Master Gardeners of the Yankton area said that as the U.S. Stock Market drops, millions of my species can rush to their basements and count the potatoes we stashed away. The lowly potato first fed Incas and then spread around the world; it is easy to grow.

- "Sun Gold" Cherry tomato. (Name withheld) from Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area.

- Wave Petunia x hybrid. Marlene Ohnstad of the Minnehaha Master Gardeners of the Sioux Falls area said that she bought 3 packs and planted them in a large container. They grew 12 inches tall and spread up to 30 inches. They are very hardy. She chose the color "rose." Guests always said "Wow!"

- Daylilies. Donna Steele of the Huron Area Master Gardeners is a fan of daylilies.

- Purple coneflower. Marla Huse of the Prairie Potters Master

Gardeners in Sully County said her perennial was spectacular this year and hopes it comes back next year.

- Zinnias. Susan Brown of Brookings Master Gardeners said that the short Thumbelina are favorites as well as the tall ones that are about 30 inches. Every year they produce more flowers than she can use. Each one is different, from the shaggy newer kind to the old tried and true. It's hard to beat a zinnia.

- Caroline raspberries, Sparkle strawberries, fingerling eggplant and Celebrity tomatoes. Marilyn Varick of Fall River Master Gardeners said these were all great this season.

- Purple coneflower. Connie Hobbs of Rapid City Garden Club said that they were so beautiful on the hillsides in Rapid City and Black Hills. She has several but will be planting more.

- Celery plants. Mary Lerssen of the Minnehaha Master Gardeners of the Sioux Falls area said that she enjoys celery plants in fresh salads, cooks with it, and freezes some for winter. She starts them from seed.

- Yellow cannas and red cannas. Mary Lerssen of Minnehaha Master Gardeners of the Sioux Falls area said that she dug the bulbs and hopes to keep them overwinter to plant them next spring. As well as yellow and red flowers of canna, she has orange and multi-colored ones and some with red leaves. They look exotic.

- Snake gourd. Howard Heidelberger of Spencer planted these for fun. He said that only one gourd grew and it looked like an anaconda 3 feet, 5 inches long. He plants other gourds for decorations or birdhouses.

- Red Fern Peony. Beverly Heidelberger of Spencer a fern peony fan. This one had beautiful healthy size and shape and there was not much spring wind, then it came. It needs support, and when she was too busy, it ended upon the ground. No extra water or fertilizer was given. As this perennial gets larger it may be divided.

- Hardy Hibiscus (red). Beverly Heidelberger of Spencer said that this plant has done well even during the drought years, even though the other colored hibiscus planted did not live through the winter. It is amazing that a tropical looking plant can grow in South Dakota. This perennial may be stared from seed, as there are many falling off the plant, only two have come up on their own during the last 5 years. She is trying more xeriscaple plants each year now.

- 'Sunset Hyssop' (Agastache rupestris) or Threadleaf Giant Hyssop or Licorice Mint. Kim Marie Weimer of Pennington County Master Gardeners of the Rapid City area said that the hyssop is USDA Zone: 4b-10 and grows in full sun to partial shade. Its height is 24-26 inches She sees bold brushes of sunset orange flowers from August to frost, blooming when everything else is done. It is a southwest native plant. Whole plant exudes rich root beer aroma. It grows in ordinary to poor soil and takes regular watering provided it's well — drained, moderate to dry. Hyssop is excellent for water smart or perennial border and self-seeds in her location in rocky borders. This plant is great for dry West River gardens and the deer never touch it. It's long — blooming, beautiful fragrant scent when touched or it rains.



Christmas Senna A Glorious Gift Of The Season

BY NORMAN WINTER
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Just about the time you least expect it the Christmasbush erupts into a yellow explosion of bloom with such staggering beauty it stuns all who see it. After all this is a color in the spring or summer and surely not expected from mid-October through November and December.

But such is the case for this large shrub known botanically as *Senna bicapsularis*. In addition to the official Christmasbush it also goes by names such as winter cassia, butterfly cassia and Christmas senna. In our area the bloom period lasts 6 to 8 weeks or until a frost causes its retreat. It is considered a zone 9-10 plant and a zone 8 perennial. At the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens in Savannah ours was simply stunning through December and then the 30-year freeze hit in January. If I lived in zone 7 and had access to seeds, I would try it on the protected side of my home or try it as an annual.

As was expected it did die to the ground but has rebounded robustly and is pushing 8 feet in height. It is native to South America and has escaped in southern Florida and some parts of the Caribbean causing it to get established in disturbed areas. In areas with frost it will be held in check.

If you have ever wondered what plants host the sulphur butterflies, this is one of the best. They will feed the orange-barred sulphur, the sleepy sulphur and the cloudless sulphur. In our garden during this time we typically have an abundance of sulphurs that seem to be getting nectar from every plant with a bloom.

Christmasbush senna will tolerate partial shade, but it is a fertile bed in full sun where it reaches its true potential. It should go without saying, but please apply a good layer of mulch after planting. It's not a high-maintenance plant at all. A couple of times during the growing season pinch or prune a little to develop a bushy mound. In our gardens we are growing it adjacent to one of our historical pillars in the Mediterranean garden.

In its glorious bloom of shocking yellow it will be in close proximity to the ultimate companions of Purple or Purple Mexican Bush sage. In other areas of the garden they are growing in beds geared toward butterflies and hummingbirds. Here they tower over Mystic Spires Blue salvia, Blue Fortune agastache, bog sage and a layer of Red-spread lantana.

Slender brown pods reaching 4 to 6 inches long usually follow bloom, allowing equally opportunity for everyone to have their own propagation material. The seed coats are hard and can be lightly scratched or scarified with sandpaper, so that water can penetrate for germination. Some suggest pouring boiling water over seeds that have been placed in a tea strainer.

Diggin' In: Fall Is A Good Time To Give Your Lawn Some TLC

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM
Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

If your cool-season lawn needs a little TLC or a total redo, fall is the time to do it.

During autumn, there's still enough warmth in the soil and warmth from the sun to help fescue or rye seed germinate and establish young roots before the first frost arrives. It's also a good time to lay cool- or warm-season sod.

"Fall is unquestionably the best time for establishing, renovating or maintaining a cool-season lawn," says master gardener Larry Riddick, a York County Virginia master gardener. He's also one of the county's new Smart Turf experts who visits yards, helps with soil samples and provides feedback.

"In southeastern Virginia, almost all cool-season lawns consist of fescue turfgrass, and the goal is to have the best conditions for seed germination and root growth. That occurs when the soil temperature reaches the 50 to 65 degree range. That's about now! Actually fescue roots can continue to grow as long as the soil temperature is above freezing."

A master gardener since 2001, Riddick says he's learned the importance of a soil test to avoid adding unnecessary nutrients.

"The \$10 cost for this test



PHOTO COURTESY PHIL LEATHERBURY/MCT

A tubular probe pulls soil samples from a yard and fills a soil test box that goes to Virginia Tech for analysis, a report that is shared with the homeowner and the nearest Virginia Cooperative Extension office.

is money well spent," he says of the kits available through Virginia Cooperative Extension offices. Soil samples are sent to Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., where an analysis is done and reports are returned to the homeowner and a nearby extension agent who can help with consultations. Nationwide, state cooperative extension programs offer similar lawn-care services and help; one near you can be found through the U.S. Department of Agriculture at www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension.

"The soil test report tells the homeowner two critical things: what is necessary to obtain the correct pH and what their fertilizer requirement is.

"I have seen many soil test reports over the years, and I can't recall seeing one where the soil content of phosphorus was inadequate."

Sometimes, green grass is not always the only answer to an eye-catching yard.

In Richmond, Va., Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden replaced 9,200 square feet of existing traditional turf with attractive, low-maintenance

ornamental grasses to showcase sustainable best-practices in one of the most

prominent sites on the garden's property — in front of the elegant glass conservatory — www.lewisginter.org. This concept can be done on a smaller scale in a home setting.

"We want to show how ornamental grass can be used in the landscape, including a formal one," says horticulture director Grace Chapman.

Plantings of 2,000 grasses include prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), purple muhlygrass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), and switchgrass Northwind (*Panicum virgatum* Northwind).

"The garden trialed seven different grasses for two years and chose these three," says garden spokeswoman Beth Monroe.

Ornamental grasses are good lawn alternatives, adds Monroe, because:

They're good for the environment. Since many ornamental grasses can grow in

poor soil, they don't need fertilizer. Their deep roots reduce stormwater runoff and help prevent erosion. They also support wildlife, for instance providing seeds and nesting habitats for some birds. Doug Tallamy, author of "Bringing Nature Home," makes a strong case for carefully considered plant selections.

They require less care. While traditional turf must be mowed frequently, ornamental grasses only need to be cut back annually. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden does this in early spring, allowing the grasses to provide seeds and structure in the landscape throughout winter. Also, once established, ornamental grasses need little to no watering.

They're beautiful. Color, texture, movement, sound, four seasons of interest — ornamental grasses have it all.

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