



“Fall” in Love with your Garden!
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Summer’s end does not mean an end to gardening; rather it’s an opportunity to refresh the gardens with one last breath of color, one more round of attractive foliage or scouting the nurseries for some much needed fruit bearing plants before winter finally sets in.

Let’s begin with discussing foliage. While most plants in your garden have succumbed to the heat, bugs or cold, visit your local garden center for a fresh stock of foliage attractive plants. Yes, ornamental cabbages and kale will do the trick for instant color but a lot of centers will stock up on *Heuchera* or coral bells. Do you remember the chocolate colored leaf variety, ‘Purple Palace’? It came out in the 80’s and 90’s and was selected as the Perennial Plant of the Year in 1991. Thanks to Dan Heims with TERRA NOVA® Nurseries, one can now find leaves of gold, silver, green, and maroon, or spotted leaves and leaves with darker veins. Grow these plants primarily for their leaves and as a bonus, all will produce small, bell shaped flowers held on stems high above the leaves. One of my favorites is *Heuchera* ‘Caramel’, the color of their leaves looking just like its namesake. Most will remain evergreen in mild winters, while all will do well in containers or simply add them to the landscape.



Clockwise: H. ‘Forever Red’, H. ‘Caramel’, H. ‘Autumn Cascade’,
 H. ‘Midnight Rose’, H. ‘Sugar Plum’, H. ‘Berry Smoothie’

Plants that produce berries are in high demand, not only for their attractive season but also food for wildlife. American beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*, is a fast growing shrub native from Maryland as far south as Florida, stretching east into Texas as well as northern Mexico. Most colonies exist in open meadows but a few grow in nearby woodland habitats. But the most suited environment for beautyberry is full sun. Our native beautyberry reaches maturity around 3 years of age, growing to approximately 5-6 foot tall and wide. However, in favorable soils, one can expect an 8-9 foot tall and wide plant. This deciduous shrub emerges in late spring with clear green leaves produced on upright to almost arching stems. White flowers are borne in summer followed by a spectacular show of bright purple berries. The berries are held in tight clusters at every leaf axil. As you can imagine, birds show up in a frenzy come early fall.

Our native beautyberry has clusters of violet-purple fruit and recently, *Callicarpa americana* ‘Welch’s Pink’, a pink fruited form and several white fruited forms have hit the market. Just south of the

border, one will find *Callicarpa acuminata* growing in the wild. Mexican beautyberry reaches 6' tall and wide or more while the color of the fruit reminds me of sipping a young cabernet on a crisp fall day. It doesn't stop there, a few species native throughout Japan will grow well in our climate. NC State has introduced a couple of hybrids, Purple Glam® and Purple Pearls®, that grow to a slightly smaller size when mature with numerous clusters of raspberry purple fruit and bronze purple leaves.



C. americana (top l)

C. Purple Glam® (r)

C. acuminata - Mexican beautyberry (top far r)



C. americana 'Welch's pink' (bottom l)

C. dichotoma - Japanese beautyberry (bottom far r)



As much as we love adding “football” mums to the fall garden, they can be overused. The showy fall mums are great to add as quick fillers and look presentable when paired with the leafy plants. However, our goal is to also find truly hardy garden mums where the flowers last for months not just weeks that most football mums do. Hardy garden mums tend to bloom later in the season, complementing the Halloween season. Look for hardy mums the next time you visit the garden centers.

New York Botanic Garden hardy garden mum series (r)



Ajania pacifica selections (below)



One of our favorite and non-traditional mums to grow is *Ajania pacifica*. *Ajania* has much smaller flower petals, but when in full flower, it's a massive showcase of bright yellow. The yellow button-like flowers sit above the leathery, greenish-grey leaves that are equally attractive. This one is much smaller and self-maintaining in the garden. No need for pinching or pruning...finally a hardy mum worth growing!

Lastly, fall is a great time to plan ahead for spring. Especially for planting your spring bulbs. Don't forget to support our dear friends Brent and Becky Heath from Brent and Becky's Bulbs. Since 2008, Brent and Becky's Bulbs have generously donated hundreds of thousands of spring blooming bulbs such as tulips and daffodils. When visiting their website, select Paul J. Ciener Botanical Garden on the Bloomin' Bucks page. 25% of your purchase will show your dedication to the future of our gardens.