

NOVEMBER'S GARDEN

Since winter is the planning season rather than the planting season, let's consider the late autumn garden. Surprisingly, there are enough plants that look good in November that it might be worthwhile to consider devoting one bed just to them. The following are plants that are in our own gardens or were observed elsewhere.

For the background a couple small evergreens to consider are 'Holmstrup' arborvitae and Alberta spruce. The Alberta spruce looks especially fresh at this time of year. 'Holmstrup' retains its dark green color all winter. For the mid or foreground bird's nest spruce provides a completely different texture from other plants of the same size.

The 'rest your eyes' grey foliage plants that have done their job all season and still look good are lambs ears, culinary sage, and lavender 'Munstead.' Shading from grey to green are rue, catmint 'Little Titch', and yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*). Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) has possibilities for use in a knot garden, but do wear gloves when handling it as it gives some people a rash. In November 'Center Glow' ninebark's foliage looked much fresher than some of the other shrubs that still have foliage at this time of year (like magnolia). Incidentally, most of the foliage of our 'Diablo' ninebark had already fallen by then.

Still very green were german irises, yellow bleeding heart (*Corydalis lutea*), and parsley. (I especially like parsley!!) The corydalis and parsley have nice fine textured foliage, in great contrast to the spears of the iris. Corydalis is a plant that is long-blooming. It gently reseeds, but is easy to control.

Not all is so calming—'Fort Laramie' strawberry and 'Biokovo' geranium leaves turned an eye-popping red (which becomes burgundy when it gets really cold). Both of these plants make nice low groundcovers for the front of the garden and between taller plants. 'Fire Chief' heuchera was still a brilliant magenta. Also in the red side of the spectrum are grasses—'Blue Heaven' little blue stem, 'Shenandoah' switch grass, and flame grass (*Miscanthus* 'Purpureus'). They combine a nice burgundy with gold tones. It is best to purchase these grasses in autumn so that you can see exactly what you are getting—there can be variation in coloring between plants.

In contrast to the green of german iris, Siberian iris foliage turned a deep gold by November that looked just lovely in the sunshine.

Last but not least—flowers!! Johnny jumpups (violets) just kept blooming. They are nice little plants to tuck in between bigger ones. Another astonishingly long lasting bloomer is german statice (it still has blooms/bracts in January). I was amazed to discover a 'Radio' calendula still going strong with its cheery golden blooms. This annual can be started indoors in the spring when you start peppers and tomatoes or sown directly outdoors when the ground thaws out. I suspect that they could be started in milk jugs as a winter sowing. 'Immortality' iris is one of the most reliable of the reblooming irises. In catalogs it is described as being pure white, but ours is actually the palest blue.

The grand finale—'Mystic Fairy' rose! This garden workhorse just doesn't know when to quit. There were still lots of flower clusters in full bloom in our garden when it got so cold that they froze solid.

Happy gardening,
Jennifer Porwit