



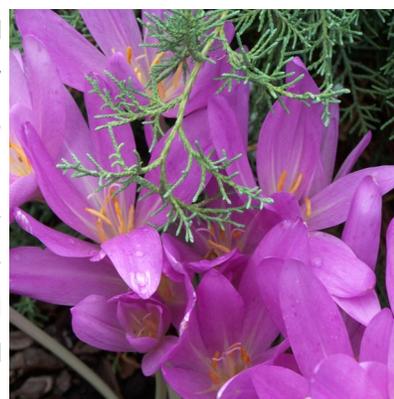
## COOL WEATHER BRINGS A WEALTH OF PLANTING POSSIBILITIES

As fall arrives and temperatures cool, not only do gardeners respond with relief from the hot and humid days of summer ... many plants do too. Leaves begin to change color with the falling temperatures and plants that have faltered a bit in the warmth of summer regain their vitality and vigor. And new crops of cool weather plants are available for fall planting.

Pansies come to mind first. Often considered the harbingers of spring, fall-planted pansies are rising in popularity. With their vibrant petals, many with colorful "faces" (also called "blotches"), pansies provide a bright splash in the garden, especially when other plants are beginning to fade. New varieties have been bred with improved cold tolerance. Fall-planted pansies bloom until winter and then again in spring. Varieties to consider include the Sky series, which includes both solid colors and faces. The Delta series offers large-flowered blooms on compact five-to-six-inch plants. Colors include blue, pink, yellow, orange and white, both with and without faces. Crown pansies, also large flowered, are clear colored and offer shades of yellow, blue, rose and white. Use pansies in containers that may need perking up after summer's toll, plant them in masses in the front of a perennial border or incorporate them in areas where they will complement spring-flowering bulbs. Pansies grow best in full sun or partial shade in moist, well-drained soil. After planting, spread a one-inch layer of mulch between plants.

Violas, relatives of pansies, also flourish in cool weather. The Sorbet series produces flowers in shades of yellows, purples and white, some bicolor. Known for its cold tolerance, this viola is recommended for fall planting with a return of bloom next spring. Sorbet reaches a neat, six-inch height.

Colchicum, often called fall crocus, is a fast-blooming bulb that should be planted in late summer or early autumn. Its dazzling shades of rosy-pink or white blossoms grow four to six inches high. The leaves emerge in spring, die to the ground in summer, followed by the flowers in fall. Plant colchicum in areas where the bright blooms can be enjoyed in fall, yet the foliage can be hidden as it emerges to hide its dying-back phase in late spring -- perhaps planted among a low ground cover such as periwinkle or ivy. As with most bulbs, a well-drained area is best for planting.



Cool weather brings out the best in ornamental cabbages and kale. Large rosettes of gray-green foliage are marked with cream, pink or purple centers that deepen as temperatures drop. Though edible, ornamental cabbage and kale are best used for their remarkably decorative foliage that brightens up beds, window boxes and containers. Leaves can be frilly-edged, such as the Peacock variety, or smooth-edged, such as Osaka. Both look nice combined with pansies or fall chrysanthemums. Mature plants reach 12 to 18 inches in height with a spread of 12 inches. Plant mums in full sun for the best color.

Garden chrysanthemums are typically associated with the cool days of autumn. Hundreds of varieties are available in a range of flower types, including a daisy, cushion and pompom. Choice of color is just as extensive. Garden mums are often classified as early-, mid- or late season, beginning in mid-September and continuing through late October. They make wonderful companions to late-flowering perennials such as asters, ornamental grasses or sedum such as Autumn Joy.

Mums also make a nice background to pansies and flowering cabbage and kale. Containers that need a refreshing change are also well served by mums. If a bright and bold look is needed, try the varieties Raquel, which is deep maroon, or Bravo, which is bright red. Dark Triumph or Tanaga show off their bronzy shades paired with purple asters. For a pastel look, try Heather, with its rich lavender petals, or Stunning Lynn, a dusty rose highlighted by raspberry center petals. With the selection of mums available, any color scheme can be fulfilled with fall chrysanthemums.

Besides planting anew in fall, gardeners can rejuvenate their existing plants by routine maintenance such as deadheading (removing spent blooms), watering during dry spells and fertilizing.

Annuals benefit from this effort and will reward the gardener with fresh flushes of flowers as cool temperatures arrive. Sweet alyssum, lobelia and petunias, for example, will respond favorably to a shearing in summer, leaving healthy stems four to six inches long. New blooms will appear and continue throughout fall. Dianthus and snapdragons will rebound, too, as temperatures cool.