

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Dress Up Your Garden with Winter Annuals

Helping Carolinians Increase Their Knowledge of Gardening, Manage Their Landscape Investment & Protect the Environment

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National Association of County Agricultural Agents Best Team Newsletter

International Association of Business Communicators 1999 Silver Quill Award

Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists Award of Excellence

When you make your annual trip to the local garden center this fall for pansies and garden mums, add some variety to the mix. Leafy vegetable greens such as mustard, kale, lettuce and chard add variety in color and texture to last from now through March.

The large, bronze foliage of the ornamental mustard 'Red Giant' makes a noticeable specimen plant because of its height and leaf size. 'Red Giant' has an aggressive growth habit with bright white petioles.

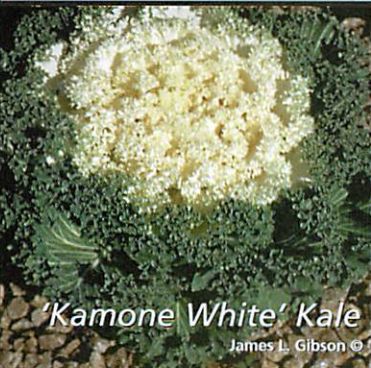
Kale adds vibrant color and focal points to a flower bed and mixes well with the color variation of pansies and garden mums. The reddish-pink petioles and silver, blue-gray foliage of 'Red Russian' and the deep magenta pigmentation on purple-gray foliage of 'Flamingo Plumes' make these good choices. The ornamental kale 'Kamone White' was rated the best curly kale by NC State University horticulture researchers because of its dark green color and expansive, creamy white center. Kale produces bright yellow flowers in early spring, an added bonus for sure!

Lettuce makes a nice fall crop with its numerous varieties of purples and yellows, and smooth, notched, big or slender leaves as well as some headed specimens. Planting a mesclun mix will result in a variety of leaf textures and colors good for window boxes and planters or as filler plants between pansies and garden mums. Swiss chard is another leafy green vegetable appearing more frequently in ornamental plantings. 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard has excellent color variation of yellows, oranges and reds in its petioles. Its robust foliage of crumpled leaves makes an excellent specimen plant with a taller growth habit. Visit the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University to see a vast array of these and many other winter annuals. Collections are installed by October and any normal fall will yield wonderful colors by November and throughout the winter. Call (919) 515-3132 or access the website at www.arb.ncsu.edu for details. **Adonna M. Mann**

Ms. Mann, a freelance photojournalist, is a recent graduate of the NC State University Department of Horticultural Science.

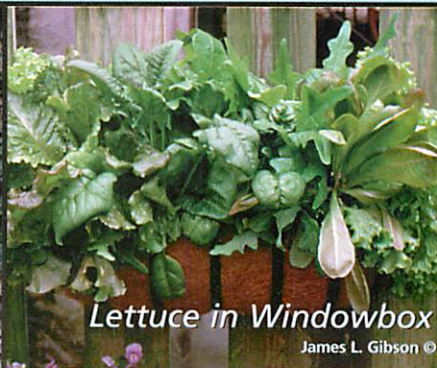
'Savannah Red Giant' Mustard

Robert E. Lyons ©



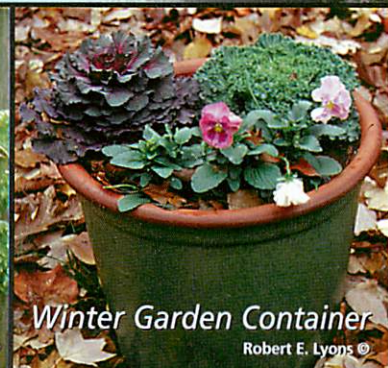
'Kamone White' Kale

James L. Gibson ©



Lettuce in Windowbox

James L. Gibson ©



Winter Garden Container

Robert E. Lyons ©



Robert E. Lyons ©

Sourwood

John MacNair ©

Chinese Pistache

John MacNair ©

Sugar Maple

Woody Plants to Consider for Fall Color

A splash of orange, a blaze of red and a glow of yellow. Autumnal foliage wonders add pop to your landscape, and now is the time to plant trees and shrubs for future color. Here's a guide to choices that are color-packed!

- **Blueberry** (*Vaccinium*) is known as an edible plant because of its berries, yet it makes a striking ornamental plant as well. When planted in full sun, it offers white flowers, lush green leaves and turns fiery red in the fall. Contact your county Cooperative Extension agent and request Extension's blueberry fact sheet or find it on the web at ncstate-plants.net. Click on Consumer Horticulture Leaflets.

- **Chinese Pistache** (*Pistacia chinensis*) serves as an excellent, large-maturing shade tree with outstanding casts of red, orange and purple. Drought-tolerant and pest-free, it requires some pruning when young to form a desirable shape. Obtain the fruitless male if possible.

- **Sourwood** (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) is a small, native tree that turns fire-engine red. It has a pyramidal form and develops fronds of white flowers in summer and white fronds of fruit in fall.

- **Maple** (*Acer*) is known for its fall color. Some alternatives to the more common red maple include the sugar maple 'Legacy', Southern sugar maple (*Acer barbatum*) and chalkbark maple (*Acer leucoderme*), which turn a vibrant yellow to yellow-orange and adapt well to hot weather. For smaller landscapes, Southern sugar and chalkbark maples mature at a 30 to 40 foot height.

- **Baldcypress** (*Taxodium distichum*) is a large, stately tree which turns *bronze in the fall*. It is a deciduous, pyramidal conifer that does well in wet or dry spots. The tree is not for the small landscape. Reserve for large areas in groupings along ponds or accent areas that you would like to fill in or as a handsome specimen tree if you have room.

- **Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier arborea*) cultivars 'Autumn Brilliance', 'Autumn Sunset', 'Ballerina' and 'Princess Diana' are all good choices. Showy, white flowers in spring, bright red to orange leaves in the fall with sweet, edible fruit make this one a favorite. Serviceberry grows to 20 feet making it ideal for the residential landscape. In order to capture maximum flowering and fall color, obtain a named cultivar and not just a species.

- **Katsura** (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) is a 20-foot-tall, handsome tree with heart-shaped leaves similar to redbud. Leaves unfold into a purplish red in the spring, change to a lush green and then a bright yellow with a hint of orange in the fall. Obtain the fruitless male if possible.



Robert E. Lyons ©

Ginkgo

- **Ginkgo** (*Ginkgo biloba*), an Asian ornamental, is a pyramidal, deciduous conifer that turns a brilliant yellow. Leaf extracts are used to concoct memory-aid pills. Give this one room to grow and select the fruitless male or you'll be sorry as the fruit can be messy with an unpleasant odor.

Don't be discouraged if fall color of most woody plants is underwhelming during the first year or two. Plants need time to overcome transplant stress to look their best. **John MacNair**

State Junior Master Gardener Program Launched

Anyone familiar with gardening knows the valuable lessons it can impart to children: responsibility in caring for a living thing, patience in waiting for a plant to grow, a greater knowledge and appreciation of science, the interdependence on each other and other living things, and the need to care for the environment.

Cooperative Extension, through 4-H programs and Master Gardener Volunteers, has long worked with children in programs involving gardening. A new venture for children in Mecklenburg County kicks off the state's first Junior Master Gardener Program!

The Cooperative Extension horticulture program in Mecklenburg County recently graduated its first Junior Master Gardener Class, which was taught by Pam D'Amour, a Master Gardener in that county. Children received 25 hours of instruction plus field trips and hands-on experiments. They have formed a 4-H club and plan to select a community service project and participate as a horticulture judging team.

To learn more about gardening projects for children, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center.

Q&A How do I dry gourds?

Once the stems turn brown, cut the gourds from the vine and wash with a solution of non-bleaching disinfectant. Use a soft brush or rag to remove dirt. Place in an area with good air circulation that is out of direct sunlight. Leave them there until they are completely dry. This may take six months. The gourds are dry when you can rattle the seeds. The white-flowering gourds take longer to dry than the yellow-flowering gourds. Don't

worry if the gourd softens and liquid drains from the gourd. A small hole would help it drain but that isn't necessary. Don't worry when mold grows on the surface. You will remove the moldy outer layer after the gourd dries. Once you have scrubbed the gourd, you can wax, varnish, shellac or paint it. The finished product may last 100 years. I will let you know when I try it. So far, between the kids and the dogs, I can only vouch for about 100 days.

David Goforth

Perennial Dividends

Many perennials that form mats or clumps will benefit from being divided periodically. The best time to do this is either in the spring when



Robert E. Lyons ©

new shoots are 2 to 3 inches tall or in the fall when the foliage starts to die back. To divide plants, dig the whole clump with a fork or spade and split the clump into several smaller parts. Do not put all the divisions back into the same space that contained the original plants. Exchange extra plants with friends, plant them elsewhere in the yard or discard. An alternative for vigorous clumps is to slice off a section with a sharp spade while leaving the main clump in the ground.

Karen Neill

ENVIRO-TIP Compost for the Environment

Composting is one of those few things that's good for your plants, good for the environment and is easy! The starting point is to buy or build a bin. One of the simplest designs is to make a round bin out of hardware cloth. But for ease of operation, nothing beats the commercially made bins that spin by turning a handle.

Once you've got a container, you're ready to find materials to put in it. This time of year, leaves are in abundance and are the perfect starting point. Shred them or add a bit of manure or fertilizer to speed up the process. Add kitchen scraps, such as vegetable peels, coffee grounds and eggshells but be sure to leave out any fats or animal byproducts. If you're starting to clean up your vegetable and flower gardens, add many of those

materials to the bin. Keep in mind that the pile must heat up to 160F to do a decent job of killing weed seeds and plant diseases. If you tend to neglect the pile, it won't heat up enough, so it may be best to leave out those items.

Grass clippings can certainly be added, but I prefer to just leave mine on the lawn. If you mow frequently, the fine clippings will decompose quickly in the turf, causing no problems while adding nutrients. As far as maintenance, turn the compost pile every 2 to 6 weeks. More frequent turning yields quicker results. It will be ready to use in a few months to a year, when it has the appearance of fine soil. Use as a mulch to keep moisture in the soil, or tilled in to improve your vegetable garden or flower beds. *Paul G. McKenzie*



Robert E. Lyons ©

Ask an Extension Master Gardener!

A highly trained and educated corps of volunteers known as Master Gardeners help extend research-based horticulture information to citizens across the state. Active in 72 North Carolina counties plus the Cherokee Reservation, over 3,000 Master Gardeners answer gardening-related questions, help at plant clinics, teach workshops and provide expertise to community beautification projects across the state.

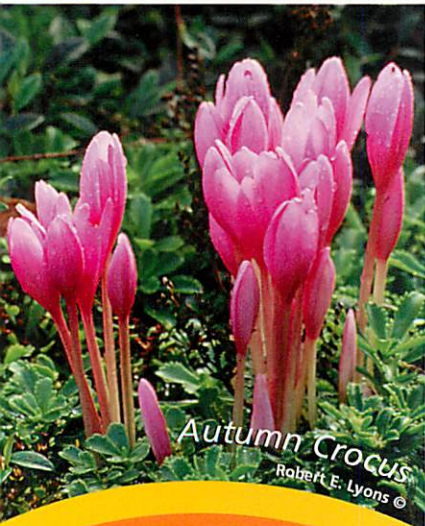
Master Gardener Volunteers must complete a specially designed training program in horticulture. To learn how you can become a Master Gardener, or to get answers to your gardening questions, call your local Cooperative Extension Center.

gardentalk



"The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies."

– Gertrude Jekyll



Garden Spot

The New Hanover County Arboretum in

Wilmington is the only one of its kind in the southeastern part of North Carolina with over 3,000 species of plants to see. Groundcovers, ornamental grasses, conifers and variety trials are some of the collections you'll see, but don't skip the fruits and berries, vegetables and herbs. Stroll along the walkways, around the lily pond and wander into one of the many special gardens. If you live in the area, take advantage of the many Cooperative Extension educational programs which utilize the arboretum as an outdoor classroom. The gardens were planned, developed, maintained and funded by Master Gardener Volunteers and others who welcome folks daily to the grounds from sunup to sundown. A small gift shop accompanies the garden which is adjacent to the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Center in Wilmington on 6206 Oleander Drive.

For more information about the garden or special events being planned call (910) 452-6393. **Karen Neill**

Gardening in October

Lawns

- Remove tree leaves from both established and newly seeded lawns.
- Mow newly seeded lawns when the turf gets to about 4 to 5 inches tall. Set the blades at 3 inches and mow weekly.
- Overseed your Bermuda lawn with annual rye for the Piedmont and coastal regions. Fertilize your cool-season turfgrass in Piedmont and mountain regions.

Ornamentals

- Plant pansies in the beds where the summer annuals were growing.
 - In the Piedmont and coastal areas, apply the appropriate preemergent herbicide to all plant beds and turf areas to avoid cool-season weeds.
 - Prepare beds or natural areas for spring-flowering bulbs to be planted later this fall.
 - If you've rooted cuttings this summer, now is a good time to pot them in a larger container. Be sure to keep them moist and protected during winter weather.
 - Move the houseplants back inside for the winter.
 - Add a perennial border to the landscape. Give it a natural look with some free-flowing lines. Add clumps of ornamental grasses and save room for some spring-flowering bulbs.
 - Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center for guidelines on proper planting techniques for trees and shrubs.

Edibles

- Build a cold frame to plant cool-weather vegetables for harvest into early winter.
 - If not planting a fall vegetable garden, plant cover crops such as annual rye, barley or wheat.
 - Order fruit trees and grape vines for delivery in February or March. **David Barkley**



Extension's *Successful Gardener* provides timely, research-based horticultural information. The newsletter is part of a statewide horticulture program which includes Extension's Regional Successful Gardener Seminar Series and county workshops. We publish 10 issues per year. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener* may be sent to:

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Ask for Extension's Successful Gardener at one of your local garden centers each month!

For a list of garden centers where you can find *Successful Gardener*, please call (704)336-2561 or visit Cooperative Extension on the web at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu>

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Tune in to "Making It Grow!" – a gardening show featuring Extension agents from the Carolinas. Saturdays, noon, WTVI 42, Charlotte

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