III LET MAKES **SOLD STATEMENT** Sun-loving annual

pops in purples

By NORMAN WINTER

MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Ornamental millets exploded onto the landscaping scene a little more than five years ago, much to the shock of gardeners everywhere. Everyone was used to seeing millets on vast acreages associated with farms, but could they pass as a landscape plant? The answer has proven to be an unequivo- full sun. cal ves.

Purple Majesty, an All America Gold Medal Selections winner, was the innovator that paved the way for millets to be brought to the landscape. Botanically speaking, these millets are Pennisetum glaucum, closely related to fountain grass Pennisetum SELECT A SITE in full sun for the alopecuroides. This species is native to the United States and is grown as an annual. It thrives in our summer heat and produces dark purple leaves topped by equally dark, fruited plumes on plants reaching 4 to 5 feet.

The next varieties that fol-

chartreuse, aging to dark bur- same depth they are growing gundy and is a little shorter at in the container with the crown bloom time than Purple Majes- slightly above the soil profile. ty. Purple Baron is more com- Space plants 12 to 16 inches pact than Purple Majesty, apart. reaching about 3 feet in height. The leaves are wider and hold ations to get the maximum a pleasing green color before beauty of these plants is to eventually turning purple in transplant to the garden be-

Jade Princess. This plant pro- number of blooms. Apply a duces electrifying lime green good layer of mulch after foliage with purple plumes on planting. 4-foot-tall plants. It is simply stunning in the landscape and the fertilizer a month after drop for other seasonal color.

showiest color. The bed should be fertile, organic-rich and well-drained. Amend the soil if needed with 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and till to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. While preparing the soil, incorporate 2

lowed were Purple Baron and 6-6 fertilizer per 100 square Jester. Jester foliage starts feet of bed space. Plant at the

One of the key considerfore they get root-bound in the The most talked about mil- container. This will improve its let from last year's trials was branching and therefore the

Give a light application of will serve as a terrific back- transplanting and again six to eight weeks later. Keep the grass watered during the summer for the best appearance. Avoid letting it dry to the wilting point. The plumes, which are a lot like cattails, are great for use in vases or for drying.

USING THE MILLETS effectively in the landscape however pounds of a slow-release, 12- takes a bold gardener. While

most have no problems planting a flat of marigolds or petu-

nias in bold, informal drifts of color, there is a tendency to want to dabble in the millets. Perhaps it is because they are grasses. Think of them the same way you would another annual.

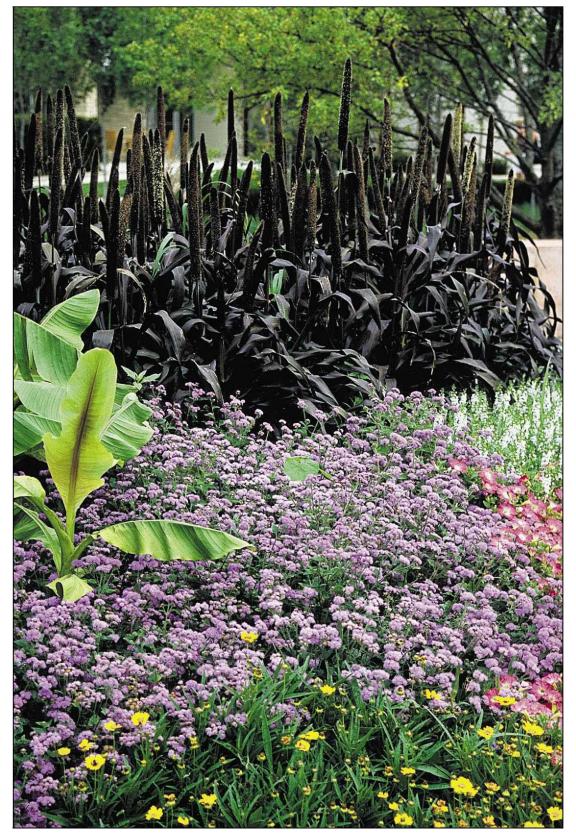
Plant a large stand or drift with a dozen or more plants. These can be a backdrop for vour other color or use them in the center of an island bed. When used in either of these styles they will command at-

tention and wow your visitors.

The millets are also well suited to container use. Try planting three together as a shocking thriller plant while using a plant like Goldilocks creeping jenny as a spiller and Easy Wave Blue petunia as a filler.

There are a lot of great garden plants to choose from this spring and the ornamental millets have the ability to make your landscape really sizzle.





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Purple Majesty ornamental millet is a stunning backdrop for the large drift of High Tide Blue ageratum, Salmon Madness Morn petunia and Serena White Angelonia.