

The dirt on color

Liven up your outdoor world all year long by planning and planting now. Here are selections that will help to make all seasons bright

By CATHERINE MALLETTE cmallette@star-telegram.com

In spring, a gardener's mind turns, of course, to dirt, glorious dirt. Spring, like fall, is planting time, a season to put into action the bountiful, colorful ideas that have been percolating throughout the long, dull winter in the gardener's brain.

For many of us, year-round color is a goal. Here will be a mass of gold lantana in July. There will be a pop of pink autumn sage in October.

What? You haven't spent the off-season planning the January-to-December color additions to your beds?

No worries. We haven't either. But we do know the local experts to call for advice before our spring plant-shopping expedition begins.

We asked them: What are your favorite plant, shrub and tree choices for year-round color? Here we share their finds. Note: Be sure to check the light requirements for each plant you buy, and place it in your garden accordingly. Also, some of these are annuals or bulbs and are only available in-season. If you need advice, ask your garden-store expert. (Plants marked with an asterisk will be available at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden's spring plant sale.)

January

Herb: Hardy Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Arp' (herb with tiny blue flowers on deep green foliage)*

Trees: Coral-bark maple (reddish maroon bark)

Shrub: Winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima* (cream-colored flowers with a wonderful fragrance)

Flowering plants: Dianthus*, cyclamen, *Matrix pansy*

Bulbs: Paperwhites (bright white flowers that are fragrant and great for cutting and bringing inside

in a dreary month)

February

Shrub: Leatherleaf mahonia, *Mahonia bealei* (terminal spikes of bright yellow and fragrant flowers that attract bees on mild days)

Flowering plants: Lenten rose (hellebore), primrose

Bulbs: Daffodil/narcissus (the smaller the flower, the better they return next year; so easy, need no care)

March

Trees: Mexican plum, *Prunus mexicana* (white, honey-scented blossoms against dark bark); red-bud

Vine: "Tangerine Beauty" crossvine, *Bignonia capreolata* (orange, trumpet-shaped flowers with yellow center)*

Bulbs: "Ice Follies" daffodils, grape hyacinth (small clusters of purple flowers; great for lawns, just mow it when it's done flowering)

Shrub: Japanese rose, *Kerria* (bright yellow flowers on a fountain-shaped bush)

Flowering plant: 'Texas Gold' columbine*

April

Tree: Chinese snowball, *Viburnum macrocephalum* (softball-size clusters of white flowers)

Flowering plants: Autumn sage, *Salvia greggii* (flowers in red, white, pink or coral cover the plant, bloom through fall, and attract hummingbirds)*; "Texas Gold" columbine; *Ioropetalum** "Purple Pixie" or Dwarf Fringe Flower

Shrubs: Bridalwreath, *Spirea prunifolia* (old-fashioned, cascading mounds of ivory blossoms); Drift Rose; "Lavender Falls" wisteria; azalea

May

Shrubs: Oakleaf hydrangea, *Hydrangea quercifolia* (very showy, terminal clusters of ivory-colored flowers)*; "Knock Out" rose (almost bulletproof, great color and more blooms per year than any other rose)

Bulbs: Day lily

June

Shrub: Chaste tree, *Vitex agnus-castus* (terminal spikes of indigo flowers); crape myrtle

Flowering plants: Purple coneflower; black-eyed Susan; "Dragon Wing" begonia*; "Dakota Gold" helenium

Bulbs: Day lily

Other: Ornamental pepper, *Capsicum annuum* (great for beginners, super easy; try "Black Pearl" and "Chilly Chili")

July

Flowering plants: Turk's cap, *Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii* (bright red, turban-shaped flowers that attract hummingbirds); blackfoot daisy*; "New Gold" lantana, *Lantana camara* "New Gold" (smothers and spills over flower beds like molten gold and attracts butterflies); "Cora" periwinkles; "Bada Bing" and "Bada Boom" begonias; black-eyed Susan



August

Flowering plant: *Zexmenia*, *Wedelia hispida* (bright yellow, daisylike flowers); **zinnia** ("Profusion" variety are easiest)

Bulb: Naked ladies, *Lycoris squamigera* (soft, pretty, pink blossoms from tough-as-nails bulbs)

Vine: Sweet autumn clematis

September

Bulb: Spider lily, *Lycoris radiata* (bright red spiderlike flowers); oxblood lily, *Rhodophiala bifida* (crimson-red trumpet-shaped flowers)

Shrubs: Mexican bush sage; flame acanthus (a hummingbird favorite)

Flowering plants: Garden mum; periwinkle, *Catharanthus roseus* "Cora" series (lots of lovely blooms all season long, great pastel colors)

Other: Ornamental peppers, especially purple-leafed varieties like "Black Pearl" (look good all summer but shine in fall)

October

Flowering plants: Fall aster, *Aster oblongifolius* (covered with lavender daisylike flowers; butterflies love them); Mexican mint marigold;

autumn sage, *Salvia greggii* "Pink Preference" (tiny pink flowers smother this native Texas shrub)

Tree: Japanese maple

November

Trees: Japanese maple, Shantung maple, Texas ash, Shumard red oak, ginkgo

Shrub: Sweetspire (red fall foliage is spectacular); American beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana* (native shrub always creates a great show with clusters of iridescent purple berries)

Flowering plants: Coral bells, *Heuchera*; copper canyon daisy

December

Trees: Possumhaw holly, *Ilex decidua* ("Warren's Red" has particularly large and red berries)

Flowering plants: Scabiosa; coconut viola, *Viola cornuta* "Coconut Swirl" (vanilla creme petals tipped with azure blue, flowers nonstop)

Shrub: "Yuletide" camellia

Other: Redbor kale; ornamental cabbage

Plant sale today

The Fort Worth Botanic

Garden's spring plant sale is 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday.

What you'll find: Plants marked with an asterisk in the list at left. Also: native and adapted plants, including annuals, perennials, grasses, citrus trees, tropicals, shrubs and vegetables. Some plant societies will also be selling their wares. Botanic Garden staff will be there to answer your plant questions. Bring your own wagon.

Also on sale: *Easy Gardens for North Central Texas*, by Steve Huddleston, the Botanic Garden's senior horticulturist, a book that will help you choose low-maintenance plants.

Directions: From Interstate 30, exit Montgomery Street and go north $\frac{3}{10}$ of a mile. Turn right on Linden Street and drive back around to the parking lot.

Our experts

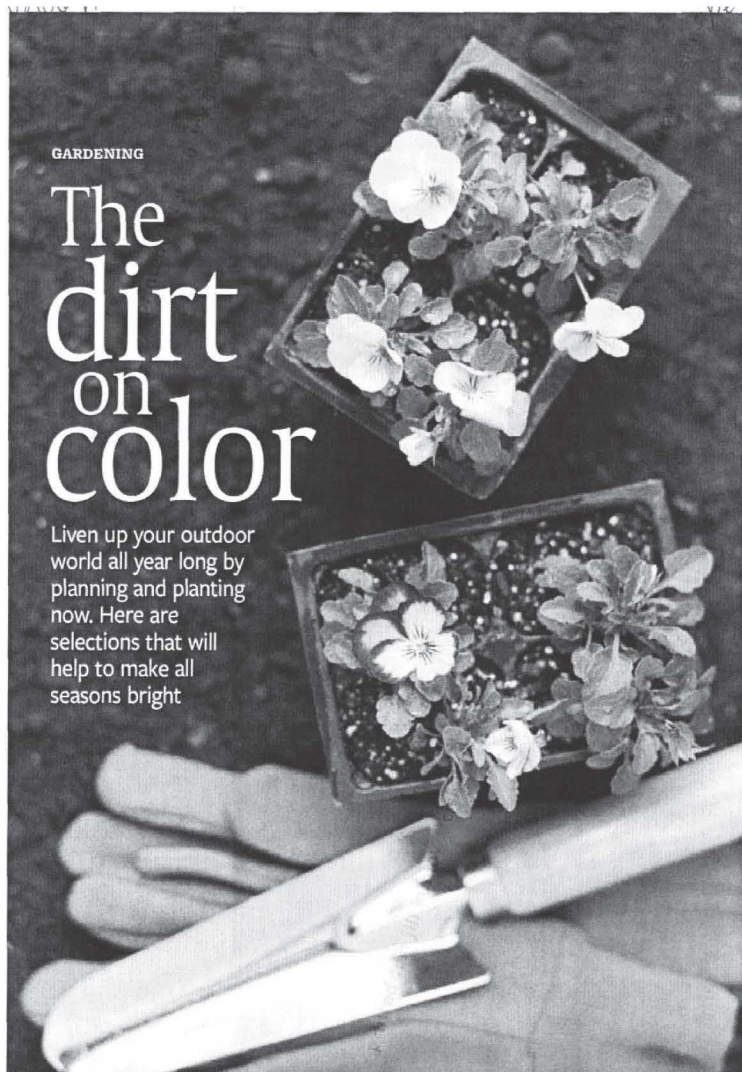
Steven Chamblee, horticulturist at Chandor Gardens, Weatherford

Steve Huddleston, senior horticulturist at Fort Worth Botanic Garden

Ruth Kinler and Kathy Newton, owner and store manager, Redenta's Garden, Arlington

Steve Moore, merchandising assistant and plant master with Calloway's Nursery, multiple locations

Mary Wilhite, president and co-owner of Blue Moon Gardens, Chandler (near Tyler)

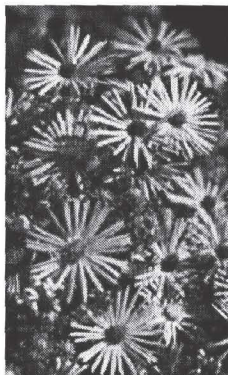


GARDENING

The dirt on color

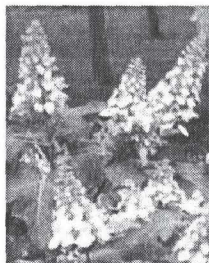
Liven up your outdoor world all year long by planning and planting now. Here are selections that will help to make all seasons bright

GETTYIMAGES/JOHN BLOCK VIA THINKSTOCK



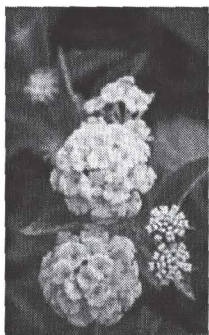
NEIL SPERRY

Fall asters



NEIL SPERRY

Oakleaf hydrangeas



ISTOCKPHOTO

Yellow lantana



ISTOCKPHOTO

Lenten ~~rose~~