

Favorite Flora: Pansies

Pansies don't wimp out



By Michael Leach

Pansies are more a part of my fall planting plans than mums. While no visual match for a plump mum ball, these small plants brighten the scene long after frost and freeze. Scattered blooms even appear in mild winter weather.

Then the kicker — a spring show before garden centers stock pansies. They can flower until hot weather wilts the lettuce. I usually choose tiny violas, because they tend to self-sow without becoming pesky — at least for me.

But I'm hoping to try the new Cool Wave Pansy, from the developers of Wave petunias. They should give mums a run for it. Introduced this spring, I saw some at the OFA trade show in July — Wow!

Plants grow about 6 to 8 inches tall but spread 2 feet or more. They come in yellow, white, white and violet, and white with pale blue edges. Please visit www.wave-rave.com to find stores near you.

If you've tried them, what do you think?

Whatever the type, I'll plant most of the pansies near the back door (the main entry for my home) and near the big windows on the sun porch. This way I enjoy their colorful contribution coming and going – or sitting comfortably by a window regardless of the weather.

Give these sun/part-shade trouper good, well-drained soil and even moisture. Plant as soon as possible so roots grab hold before cold weather arrives. Come spring, when you're trimming back brown mums, pansies will be welcoming the new growing season.