



The Power of **PURPLE**

It's a cool color that's really hot right now. How about adding more purple (and those 'nearly black' plants) to your garden this year?



A reblooming lacecap hydrangea, 'Twist-n-Shout' provides blossoms of pink or periwinkle depending on soil acidity. This selection also provides stunning red-burgundy foliage in the fall. Top: Clematis 'Crystal Fountain' boasts huge 4- to 5-inch lilac-colored flowers with fountain-like tufted centers and blooms lasting from June through September.

By Maria Zampini



Pin Stripe
Petunia
&
Angel Mist



Top: Spectacular 9- to 20-inch pendulous clusters of 'Lavender Falls' wisteria blooms adorn Southwood Landscape and Nursery in the spring. Smaller racemes will appear again during the summer. **Middle:** *Cleome* 'Senorita Rosalita' is a new hybrid from Proven Winners. Unlike older varieties, this one doesn't self-seed and attempt to take over your garden. **Above:** Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.) provides tasty purple fruit that can be used in jams, pies and wine. Pictured is Spring Glory®, an upright, smaller selection that will also provide orange-red fall color.

Imagine this: *Jeopardy* TV game show host Alex Trebek announces the category "Gardening Color Palette." Then he supplies these clues: calms the mind and nerves; its complementary color is yellow; it helps make a small space feel larger. I answer, "For \$2,000, Alex, the answer, or the question, is, "What is the color purple?"

Besides green, purple is the only color that blends with most anything in the landscape. There is a vast array of choices in purple — the type of plants, which part of the plant is colored (foliage, fruit, flower) and which shade of purple.

Mix It Up Annually

The quickest, easiest way to add a pop of purple is with annuals and seasonal plants. Each year, Pam Bennett, state Master Gardener volunteer coordinator and horticulture educator for Ohio State University Extension, plants a trial garden testing over 200 different annuals. Pam says some of the top purple performers in their evaluations include *Cleome* 'Senorita Rosalita', *Angelonia* AngelMist™ (lavender) and Angelface® (dark violet), *Lantana* Lucious® Grape, along with *Petunia* Pin Stripe™ (deep violet with white stripes) and Pretty Much Picasso™ (purple with green edges).

For colored foliage, Pam suggests an ornamental pepper named 'Black Pearl' which has dark foliage and purplish-black peppers that turn red. Of course mums, asters, cabbage and kale are all superb seasonal choices.

Parade of Perennials

Some popular purple perennials have blooms that are set off by gray-white foliage like Russian sage, catmint, lavender and globe thistle. Additionally, herbaceous perennials like buddleia, caryopteris and vitex offer a variety of purple summer blooms.

Nothing shouts "Spring is here!" like lavender and purple creeping phlox in mass on a slope, border or as a ground cover. I adore summer-blooming, hardy, garden phlox like the Candy Store Series™ Grape Lollipop, which fits perfectly into the shrub border.

Purple can make other colors sizzle brighter. A stunning example is the blue-violet flowers of 'Marcus' salvia and golden-yellow 'Stella d'Oro' daylily contrasted against Golden Ruby® dwarf variegated barberry, which has new growth

that is florescent orange maturing to burgundy centers with a gold edge.

Purple Pleases in the Kitchen

Denise Schreiber, author of *Eat Your Roses, Pansies, Lavender and 49 Other Plants*, says there are many old-time favorites that not only bring zest into the landscape but to your kitchen. Denise is fond of lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*, not *S. reticulata*) for the fragrance and sweetness they give to desserts like lilac syrup for ricotta-stuffed crepes or brushed over pastries.

Her perennial favorite is lavender. The species, *Lavandula angustifolia*, is beloved for its aromatic fragrance. It can be used in lavender blueberry scones. You can use the branches, first soaked in water, for smoking poultry on the grill, too. A local restaurant I frequent serves up lavender lemonade and lavender chicken salad.

Denise says lavender looks wonderful with simple things like marigolds, zinnias or next to anything white like artemisia or dusty miller.

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis* and *A. arborea*) produces an abundance of purple berries. Be quick to pick them when ripe or the birds will get them first. The berries are full of vitamin C, and you can create jellies, jams, cordials and pies.

Foliage Hues

It seems in design today the only focus is on flowers. While understandable, I believe year-round foliage color, as well as four seasons of beauty, are additional elements that should not be forgotten in the planning process. Diverse foliage provides a constant backdrop for flowers.

For a weeping silhouette, consider Purple Rain® European white birch. New foliage is lustrous, vivid purple making a striking contrast to its white bark. For something flowering, choose 'Ruby Falls' redbud. Its pendulous branches hold dark rose-purple flowers followed by heart-shaped, deep purple foliage.

Purple-leaved ornamental trees range from 'Merlot' or 'Forest Pansy' redbud with red-purple flowers to Crimson Pointe®, an extremely upright flowering plum with white blossoms. Royal Raindrops® crabapple has deep purple foliage while Rejoice™ has green leaves with a wine cast and purple fruit. Both have a profusion of pinkish-red blooms.

One of the most famous shade trees is 'Crimson King' maple. Improvements include Conquest™, a columnar selec-



Right: 'Lunar Glow' bergenia boasts light yellow leaves and dark pink flowers during the growing season while retaining burgundy-colored fall leaves in the winter. Above: Lilacs are useful as an informal screen, background shrub or specimen. 'Declaration' provides large, deep reddish-purple, fragrant flowers seven to 10 days earlier than common lilacs.



Deep Purple or Black?

You say to-MA-to, I say to-MAH-to. You say po-TA-to, I say po-TAH-to. You say deep purple, I say black. Either way, these plants, which verge on the cusp between deep purple and black, are a unique addition to any landscape.



Above Left: For an elegant look, try *Petunia* 'Black Velvet', the first "black" petunia. It has an upright, mounding habit and can easily combine with other sun-loving plants. Top Right: 'Onyx Odyssey' hellebore is one of the Winter Jewels™ strains and is hardy to Zone 5. Above Right: A ground hugging plant, *Ajuga reptans* 'Black Scallop' has dark blackish scalloped foliage. Its color deepens with cooler temperatures and it does not get powdery mildew. Hardy to Zone 4.

tion making it great for smaller spaces. New foliage is burgundy-red, maturing to a deep green. While the foliage and mature size of *Crimson Sunset*™ maple resembles 'Crimson King', its shape is slightly more upright and compact. It actually flourishes in extreme heat and humidity.

Ponder shrubs like purple smoke tree (*Cotinus* sp.), barberry (*Berberis* sp.) or weigela (*Weigela* sp.) as your purple pick. Besides purple foliage, common ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) is a native and has spectacular exfoliating bark and white summer flowers. Consider *Diablo*® or a smaller version, *Little Devil*™, as a background or border plant.

Look no further than heuchera for purple-leaved perennials to be planted in mass, mixed beds or containers. 'Obsidian' has dark foliage that doesn't fade, even in full sun. 'Purple Petticoats' has dark purple, frilly foliage while 'Sashay' has ruffled leaves that are dark green with burgundy undersides.

Ron Wilson, host of Ohio radio's *In the Garden with Ron Wilson*, recently said, "Give me plants with foliage colors and you can keep the ones that flower. Purple foliage is very bold and makes a wonderful contrast to other colors. But, I think it needs to be used wisely as to not take over the planting, containers or especially in the landscape. An accent tree, a spot of color to attract attention to a focal point or entryway are great ways to use purple. As an example, by our front door, I have one 'Black Lace' elderberry planted among several shades of green plants on one side, and a small massing of 'Crimson Pygmy' barberry underplanted with the yellows of 'Angelina' sedum on the other side. Not too much purple—just enough to contrast with the shades of green and yellow and to bring the eye toward the entrance."

If you want to plant more purple, I suggest for balance using less of the most bold purple shade and more of the darkest one. Regardless, have fun and as in "Harold and The Purple Crayon," you too can create a world of your own design, only this time purple plants are the writing tool. ✂

Maria Zampini is the owner of Lake County New Plants LLC which markets and licenses LCN Selections new plant introductions. She is a featured writer and columnist in consumer magazines and horticultural trade journals as well as a nationally known speaker on plant patents, trademarks and new plant introductions.