

[How to make summer last a little longer](#)

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MAPLE RIDGE, BC -- AUGUST 23, 2012 -- Jennifer Kok takes in some of the autumn colour in the greenhouse in Maple Ridge on August 23, 2012. (Wayne Leidenfrost/ PNG) (For story by Steve Whysall)

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Think of September as the time for cool-season gardening. I like to think of it as the second spring. Both terms mean the same thing: It's a great time to do some real gardening again. Listen to Jennifer Kok of Amsterdam Greenhouses in Pitt Meadows, someone who knows a lot about second-spring/cool-season gardening.

"The ground is optimum in September. Soil temperature in the fall is the warmest of the whole year. By comparison, in spring, the ground is usually cold and damp and plants take longer to get established.

This is the month to do all sorts of projects; dividing perennials, moving shrubs to a better location, planting trees, planting fall crocuses and generally reorganizing the garden and doing renovation projects to get plants in the right (or better) place for next year.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. This is still technically late summer; fall doesn't officially

begin until Sept. 22, so let's try to keep this summer going as long as we can.



What Kok has in mind, for starters, is giving the garden a whole new burst of colour, using fabulous jewel-coloured cyclamen flowers in a new range bred by Morel, of France.

Amsterdam Greenhouses, located at 19100 Old Dewdney Trunk Rd., has just grown a whole crop of 40,000 of these plants that come in a wide range of colours from purple, red and fuchsia to white, pink, salmon and a red-white mix.

Seeds were sowed in February and the plants, ready and blooming and looking terrific, have just come out of the greenhouse.

The beauty of these plants is that not only do they have long-lasting bright flowers, but they also have attractive highly patterned foliage.

They are not invulnerable to frost, but they do like cool weather and especially thrive in the

cooler days and nights of September.



Kok has grown three key types for the late-summer market — Metis, Tianis and Latinia — all of which are ideal for growing in containers, window boxes or in light shade areas of the garden. “There are large varieties, called Halios, that are more suitable for indoor use, although all of these cyclamen can also be grown indoors, which makes them perfect hostess gifts. “The great thing about these cyclamen is that they have such a long blooming period,” says Kok. “They can keep producing flowers from early September right through to December. They

tolerate light frost, up to -5 C.”



Pansies are another crop just coming on to the market. Amsterdam Greenhouses sowed seed for its Matrix crop in July and the plants are now on the shelves in a spectacular range of colours. Ball Horticultural, of Chicago, has also produced a new breed of cool-season/second-spring pansies called Cool Wave, bred especially to give gardens a colour boost through fall. These are available at Home Depot stores.

Pansies and cyclamen are two of the best plants for boosting colour in the garden at this time of year.

If you have a wedding or anniversary party planned for this month, you won't want to miss the chance to use both of these plants to pump up colour for the occasion.



The Matrix pansies at Amsterdam come in six packs with each plant individually packaged in its own cell, making it easier to take the plant out without damaging the root system.

Pansies are also being touted as the ideal plant to use for seasonal-themed displays, such as in containers with millet, purple cabbage or kale for Thanksgiving or inside pumpkins for Halloween.

“White pansies in a hanging basket adorned with sunglasses create a spooky ghost and adding pansies to a hollow pumpkin makes for a creative centerpiece,” says Cassandra Koehler of Ball Horticultural.

At Amsterdam, Kok says there are also plenty of high-impact colour plants that can be popped into the garden to make summer last longer, such as the various annual varieties of rudbeckia, especially the warm red-burgundy colour of Cherry Brandy and the sunny yellows of Indian Summer and Cherokee Sunshine.

September is also a great time for gardeners to find plant bargains.

There is no better time to renovate your garden because large specimens of perennials and grasses are available for cut-rate prices at garden centres along with the whole range of shrubs.

“Ornamental grasses are a big seller at this time of year because people can see what they are buying, whereas in spring, the warm-season grasses are barely beginning to emerge from their pots,” says Kok.

Gardeners also have a much better idea in September about the specialty zones of their garden; they know where the super-hot, dry areas are and where the cooler, perpetually shady spots are. This makes it a lot easier to buy the perfect plant for the right spot. Perennials and shrubs also

look terrific in their pots which means they can be dropped into their new home and quickly become established before winter and be in place, ready to go, for next year.

“There is a lot of opportunity this time of year to give your garden a boost of colour as well as renovate it and get new borders planted,” says Kok.

“It is also a smart way to save money and make summer last a little longer.”

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