



Allium thunbergii 'Ozawa'

Petite Gardenscapes

Sensible designs for the weekend gardener

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OctoberS 2009
Volume 1, Issue 10

Special Interest Articles:

- Ground Covers
- "Found" Plants
- Gardening with arthritis

Timely Tip:

For an October gardening calendar, go to www.jsonline.com/features/homeandgarden

Monthly features

>Plant disorder of the month

>Bulb of the month

>Timely Tip

Questions or comment? Contact Pat at pbaganz@voyager.net or at 262-353-6555

Covering a Lot of Ground

Ground covers can cover a multitude of sins, as the saying goes. They serve as a grass substitute under shady trees, keep soil from eroding on a slope, and can act as a path wandering through a landscape. The following are some little-known perennials that can serve as groundcovers. They are listed in order of their sun tolerance with FS being full sun, PSh meaning part sun/part shade. November's issue will continue the list of part shade to shady groundcovers. If you're looking for a replacement for perennials or grass, try one of these useful and attractive choices.

FF (Flower Factory, Stoughton,) and **W** (Wayside Gardens catalog) are some firms that carry these plants.

Fragaria sp. 'Pink Panda'



plantsafari.com

Wild Strawberry-mat - forming, edible fruit, and useful on slopes 4-6" FS **FF**

Arenaria sp. Sandwort



stepables.com

Small narrow leaves form a dense mat with tiny white or pink flowers in summer. Water more if in full sun. 1-4" FS-PSh **FF**

Degenia velebitica



wildginerfarm.com

This plant works in rock gardens and as a ground cover with silvery gray stems and bright yellow flowers. 2-4" FS-PSh **FF**

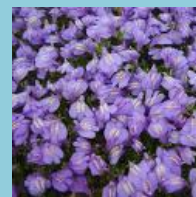
Eonymus fortunei 'Kewensis'



edromnurseries.co.uk

Tiny green leaves, evergreen, drought tolerant 6" FS-PSh **FF**

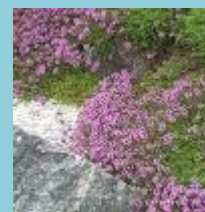
Mazus reptans



estabrooksonline.com

Mazus forms a low 2" green mat with large lavender flowers, FS-PSh **FF, W**

Thymus sp Thyme



shootgardening.co.uk

Several prostrate or creeping types of the herb, thyme, are very useful as groundcovers, and produce a delightful aroma when stepped on or brushed against. T. serpyllum coccineus has crimson-red flowers and grows 2-4" **FF, W**



Dump(ster) Diving for Plants

My sister Mary Bosman (author, artist, gardener) lives in Sturgeon Bay which has a public compost site. This has opened up a whole new world for her gardening tastes. A few weeks ago, she started sending me plant photos to identify and asking if it would prosper in her gardens. Turns out she finds these poor discarded plants at the compost site and brings home the ones that appeal to her. She's had some luck, too- shown here with a once-discarded mum that's thanking her for the save by blooming their little yellow heads off.



One of the first plants Mary sent a picture of was a *Campanula punctata* 'Pink Octopus' which someone had discarded. Obviously, someone wasn't enamored with Mary's plant, but two weeks later, friends Bruce and Maggie showed me a 'Pink Octopus' they had purchased in Door County. (below) *Campanula* 'Pink Octopus'



Plantgogo.com

Mary's other finds included a big bunch of tall field daisies, a *Spirea* shrub, two big garden mum plants, yellow and gold, ferns for her shady garden, *Stella d'Oro* lilies, and a geranium with deep magenta blooms. Mary, who isn't too shy, even found an old lady who had the biggest, most fragrant *Hosta* blooms and invited her to her house in the Spring to divide them! The message here is that your local dump/compost site can be a treasure trove of plants that didn't work out, or that worked out far too well for a gardener.

Sometimes, as in the case of Port Washington's Rotary Park, plants proliferate beyond our ability to sell them or give them away, and they have to be discarded. That hurts, but if you happen to follow someone into the dump who's pitching plants, don't be afraid to ask why they're discarding plants.

One gardener's mistake could be your win!

To Rake or not to Rake

Taking all those pretty leaves off your lawn can be a pain in the back, the neck, the arms...the list of aches goes on. But do you *need* to haul them to the curb? At a University of Wisconsin extension seminar last winter, attentive gardeners were told to mow or shred leaves from healthy trees and leave a light layer on the lawn (meaning you can still see some of the lawn through the chopped leaves). And while you're raking, get an ergonomic rake like the one below.



Lifewiththeease.com

Compost the rest of the leaves after mowing them into your mowers bag or using a leaf shredder and mix with your green yard waste. By doing so, you're adding nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn that would otherwise be hauled away. Composted leaf litter, if not chopped too finely, adds some nutrients and a lot of carbon.

Or, make leaf mold: Using leaf mold in your garden beds and borders adds nutrients and organic material, creating fertile soil naturally. (See p. 4 for recipe)

Leaves from diseased plants and trees need to be raked up and discarded, of course, so as not to continue the problem.



Gardening with Arthritis

By Elizabeth O'Connell,

Gardening can be a life-long hobby if advancing age doesn't force the gardener to throw in the trowel. Fortunately, sensible care for your body and tools to help cope with arthritic joints and bad backs can make gardening easier than ever for aging enthusiasts.

A few sensible steps can prevent problems for all gardeners. That means taking short breaks while outside. Take a few moments to stretch after every 30 minutes of work. This allows muscles and joints to relax and rest, and improves circulation. Then go back to the job refreshed. It may take a little longer to finish a task but gardening is a long-term proposition anyway.

Learning to let the tools do the work also means less stress on your body. While it's still tempting to use brute force to uproot stubborn weeds, excavate planting holes or divide stubborn perennials, I try not to give in to temptation. I've got a good weeding tool and a selection of shovels in several sizes so I'm less tempted to remove a stubborn rock in a planting hole by using my trowel or spading fork as a

lever.

Using wheeled helpers also minimizes wear and tear on gardeners. I have an inexpensive flat-bed cart to move pots and heavy bags of soil or mulch. The bed is only inches off the ground so I can tilt a pot up, sit it on the edge of the bed and then pull it onto the flat-bed. There's no need to lift the heavy weight to move it. The flat-bed cost less than \$30 and is used almost every time I step outside.

A much more expensive product is my *Fold-It* aluminum garden cart. It's small, lightweight and folds for storage. Unlike wheelbarrows, this two-wheeled cart has back legs for stability and the aluminum construction means much lighter loads. These are expensive catalog items although you can sometimes find them at greatly reduced prices at outlets like Sam's Club or Costco.

Of course, few of us work smart when we're young, when future joint and muscle damage might be avoided. That's why arthritic joints and bad backs accompany older gardeners when they head outside. Luckily, there are now tools to help with

those problems.

This time of year look for add-on handles for tools like rakes. These handles attach to the lower portion of the rake handle and allow you to maintain an upright position while working. This minimizes strain on the lower back. Also look for trowels and weeders with wider handles that are easier for arthritic hands to grip. Some of these even have extended grips so some of the stress of digging and weeding is transferred from the hand to the forearm to reduce fatigue. (Always test these tools before purchasing to be sure it's the right one for you).

There are even gardening gloves recommended by the Arthritis Foundation. *Bionic Gloves* give support to finger joints as well as protection and added warmth. For gardeners like me who have arthritis in the joints at the base of the thumb (the most common place for arthritis in women) there are a variety of hand braces that can also give added support to these sore spots. There are braces for wrists, elbows and knees at most pharmacies, too.

Experts also

suggest mature gardeners pick which jobs they can do and then hand-off more difficult tasks to family members or hired help. Simplify your garden if some jobs become too unappealing. And don't forget the sensible use of analgesics and heat to soothe aching joints. A relaxing hot bath can be a gardener's best friend at the end of the day.

Resource list:

www.arthritis.org

Arthritis Foundation

www.motus.mb.ca

Ergonomic Grips for Arthritis and Back Pain

www.northerntool.com

Foldit Aluminum Garden Cart

www.bionicgloves.com

Gloves for Arthritic Hands



Intoactive.com.au



Recipe for Leaf Mold

This recipe has two ingredients: leaves and water. It's also best to build this in an enclosed area, so the leaves don't up and well, leave. Start with a mound of Leaves, about three feet high and wide, and water

(using a hose is easiest). Add more leaves and more water. Now, wait., but keep the leaves from drying out while fungi do the work. This is not a compost pile- which is when bacteria do the work. The leaf mold can

become a wonderful soil amendment in six months to a year. Impatient? Use the lawn mower to break the leaves into smaller pieces. Turning the mold with a garden fork

will speed the process up, too. And voila- after a little patience- you have leaf mold!



Finegardening.com

Plant Disorder of the Month

It's October, the witching month, so it's appropriate to talk about a strange growth cluster called Witches' Broom, a disruption of the plant cells usually caused by a fungus, Taphinra spp.

Symptoms: Clusters of dense, twiggy growth looking like a bird's nest on tree branches. Usually noticeable after leaf drop.

Prevention: None

Control: Remove and burn affected branches or leave on plant, as they actually do no harm to the plant.

Witches' Broom



Debtorry.typepad.com

Plants attacked: Members of the Birch family (Betula), Cherry and Plum family (Prunus) and Honeysuckle (Lonicera), but other plants may also have them.

"What's Wrong with my Plant?" Steven Bradley

BULB OF THE MONTH

A seriously underused bulb is *Allium thunbergii* 'Ozawa' which blooms in October, and the 1 ½ " violet bloom (think massive chive flower) can persist into winter. This 6-7" bulb gets planted in the fall, but can often be found in pots at garden centers in the spring. This great little plant will grow in most reasonably well-drained soils, even clay, in full sun, and will tolerate dry areas like herb gardens and rock gardens . The grass-like foliage stays green all season.