

October 2022 Gardener's Corner

Planting for Winter Color

By Cate White, San Joaquin County Master Gardener

As the year turns to Autumn with its mild days and crisp nights, summer flowering plants begin to fade and summer annuals are done. October is the perfect month to replace spent warm weather plants with cool weather plants that provide fall, winter and early spring color. Planting now when days are still mild allows roots to get established before the cold weather sets in. There are many colorful plants to choose from. What follows is a list of some brightly flowered and easy-to-grow cool weather plants, along with some tips for growing them. When planting, remember to enrich the soil with some good quality compost. For fall planting, it's best to set out young plants, such as those found in six packs or six-inch pots. Many of these are annuals some of which can also be planted from seed in late February or early March.

- **Calendula**---this brightly colored annual, also known as Pot Marigold, faithfully produces yellow, gold, or orange flowers from fall to spring. Plants are from 1 to 1 ½ feet tall, and the daisy-like flowers can single or double. They prefer full sun and regular watering. Powdery mildew can be a problem and is best controlled with neem oil spray.
- **Chrysanthemum**---these fall favorites with colorful flowers come in almost all colors except blue. While they are perennials, they are generally treated as annuals, growing up to 3 feet tall. Flowers are button sized to large double blooms. Larger flowered varieties may need staking. Plant in full sun.
- **Cyclamen**---one of my favorite winter flowers. Growing from underground rhizomes, they die back completely in warm weather, resprouting when the weather grows cool. Plants are 6 to 8 inches tall with heart shaped leaves, sometimes variegated, and crimson, shades of pink, or white flowers. They prefer light shade and are relatively pest free.
- **Decorative Kale**---while these are not flowers, they do provide vivid winter color with crinkly purple or white leaves. Low growing, they thrive even during frosty weather, and are most attractive when interplanted with flowering plants. Plant in full sun. Relatively pest free.
- **Iceland Poppy**---these attractive winter blooming poppies bloom in yellow, orange or white. Leaves form low growing rosettes with buds rising 6 to 8 inches above. They prefer full sun.
- **Primrose or Primula**---these freely flowering plants are common in nurseries and garden centers in the fall and winter months. They grow 8 to 15 inches high (depending on the variety) and can spread up to 1 foot. Flowers are borne in clusters on erect stems above low growing foliage and come in a wide variety of colors. While these are perennial plants, they are usually grown as annuals since they don't do well in our hot summers. The fairy primrose variety has more delicate flowers in pastel shades. Planted early enough in the fall, primroses will bloom through spring. They can take morning sun but should be shaded from intense afternoon sun.



*Cyclamen**



*Decorative Kale**



*Primroses**

- Pansies and Violas---these are some of the most common and successful winter bloomers. They are low growing, with flowers coming many sizes and colors, including multi-colored. They easily survive frost. Violas will reseed freely, so may come up in your garden the following fall. They prefer full sun.
- Snapdragons---these plants come in compact and tall varieties. They send up flower-covered stalks in various bright colors. Hummingbirds are often attracted to them. Prefer full sun. May be subject to powdery mildew.
- Stock---similar in growth habits to snap dragons, these old-fashioned favorites offer a bonus with their sweet-spicy fragrance. Colors are usually pastel lavenders, pink and white, but they can also come in blue or yellow. Plant in full sun to light shade.

Snails are one of winter's most voracious pests, and most of these plants are appealing to them, so be sure to put out bait. Use iron-based bait that is less toxic to pets. Many of the plants on the list also do well in pots, so place a few pots of colorful flowers strategically on your patio or entry way for an uplifting burst of color.

****All pictures are open source***

October Garden Check List

- Lift, divide and replant overgrown perennials, such as Shasta Daisies and irises
- Plant trees, shrubs and hardy perennials now to get their roots established during cool weather.
- Deadhead roses and feed one last time.
- Once nighttime temperatures reach 50 degrees or less for two weeks, start planting bulbs such as daffodils, freesia, hyacinth, Dutch iris, grape hyacinth and anemone.
- Keep citrus trees trimmed up 24" from the ground to prevent brown rot.
- Use iron based bait to control snails and slugs. Also put out bait if you notice ants
- Adjust watering systems according to weather conditions