

Fall into

Autumn means more than leaves turning red, football games and a new wardrobe; it also is a reunion with routine. The empty nest, so to speak, is welcomed with its familiarity and comfort. With the end of extended vacations and long hot summer days, we welcome the rhythms of home and the gardens that frame our place of rest.

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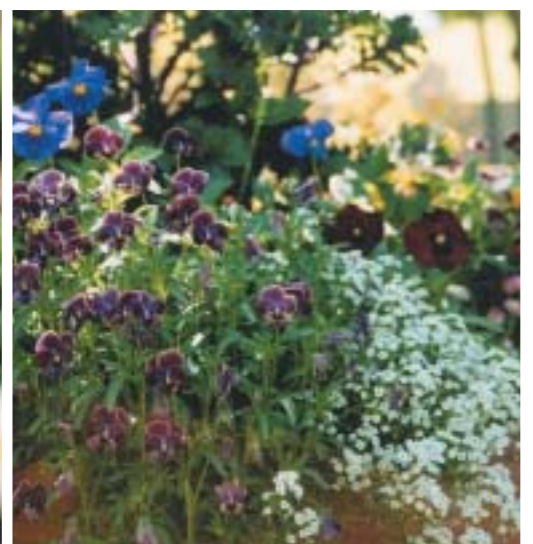
Nature's Nest



oxalis, lamium, snapdragons and parsley



Fennel nibbling on English daisies



baby face violas and allium



Ioropetalum, apricot azalea and wisteria cane



It is nurturing after a long day to pull into your drive and be greeted by what I call an “invitation garden” full of sages, parsley, yellow snaps, and bronzed foliage. Yet, because of mass commercial pressure to install our gardens in Spring, so many of us miss out on our best season to plant. Many are aware Fall is a great time to plant trees, but not so aware that it is equally advantageous to install roses, perennials and cool weather color.

I love it when clients come to me and say, “We want our gardens to look as fun as our parties, and the yard guy wants to plant pansies, again.” I’m not knocking pansies completely; they are one of my favorite childhood blooms, since they grow wild in the Pacific Northwest. As a little girl I picked handfuls in the fields near my grandparents’ home. When my grandmother explained to me, “the more you pick, the more they bloom,” I delighted in pinching off their smiling faces.

Practically speaking, pansies do not grow well in the shade; they like the cool but love the sun. In shade, use a mix of ferns, club moss, lamium, huechera and cyclamen for cool color. This evergreens mix looks lovely Fall, Winter, and Spring. Just remember, plants need more water in the icy winter months.

I know this sounds odd to mention, but I have customers who buy plants from me and ask if their choices will live through the Winter. I explain the importance of organic soil preparation, and jokingly toss out, “Oh yeah, by the way, they need water, too.” Then a puzzled look crosses their faces. Yes, by all means, water in the Winter. Just as freezing weather pulls the moisture from our skin, the same happens with plants. So, for all of you who are wondering why your gardens do not come back in the Spring, it may be that they freeze dry in poor soil.

Here’s a tip: Watch the forecast and give your plants a good soak before it freezes.

Perennial gardens benefit from a good dose of Winter. As is life, some of the loveliest blooms are set in cold, dark days. My favorite cool weather flowers are a mix of snapdragons, English daisies, lamium, alyssum and a few violas (the petite looking pansy). These hardy little plants are easy to nestle in among existing perennials and work beautifully in entryway containers.

The thing I like most about this old world Fall planting is the magnified beauty it brings in the early Spring. So why not cash in on one of Fort Worth’s best assets—Fall planting?

Being a Northwest transplant, I was first introduced to Texas Fall gardening while attending a workshop at Weston Gardens. It makes perfect sense. Landscape done in the Fall has until February to adjust, whereas plants that go in during Spring may just have a couple of months before Summer roars in like a lion.

In a nutshell:

- Fort Worth’s climate is best-suited for autumn landscape and gardens
- Plant trees, perennials, roses, sages and cool weather flowers
- Uncommon color that thrives Fall through Spring includes snapdragons, English daisies, violas, kale, alyssum and lamium
- Time to transplant and feed
- Autumn naturally brings us home to our gardens

Most importantly, autumn is like a familiar blanket wrapped around our life and nested in nature. It is here so many of us collect our thoughts like fallen leaves. Fall foliage bursting out at entryways and in private gardens makes us feel good and sets the tone for family and friends.



Graham Thomas rose, variegated macanthus, Queen Ann lace and Japanese maple

Elizabeth Samudio and husband James own and operate Elizabeth Anna’s Old World Garden—a landscape design and installation company located at 2825 8th Avenue. Elizabeth has installed numerous gardens throughout North Texas. Elizabeth and James are proud to provide the only totally organic garden store in Fort Worth.