

Extending the Garden into Fall

Flower beds should be in bloom from the first warm days of early spring to the first hard frost of mid-autumn. We have no trouble filling our gardens with plants that flower in the months of June, July and August, but it is the later months of September and October we need to focus our plant collections to include blooming plants for these times.

When I first came to the Botanical Garden in 1989, I would watch each fall as the late flowering perennials were regularly frosted before the flowers even had a chance to fully form. Nowadays, these plants not only flower, but also have ample time to set seed! Global warming does seem to have a silver lining, at least where it comes to our gardening year!

As a result, we now can choose from the many varieties of perennials with late flowering habits. Some of my favorites include:



***Helianthemum autumnale* (Sneezeweed)**

This hardy member of the daisy family (Compositae) is a must for the fall garden. Its bronzy-red flowers are borne atop 3-4 ft sturdy stems in mid September. The petals of each flower are drawn back from the central disc and the flowering period spans over 3-4 weeks.



Anemone hupehensis, A. X hybrida

This vigorous branching perennial of the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) bears cup-shaped, single, rose-pink flowers in late summer and early fall. Its delicate blooms, late into the season, make this hardy plant well worth adding to your garden.

Aster spp.

Many species of this popular genus, also of the Compositae family, have late flowering times. The very tall (5-6 feet) *A. novae-angliae* has done very well for us in the Garden and is a great companion plant to the *Helenium autumnale*. For the rock garden or front of the border try the New York Aster, *Aster novi-belgii* or the very dwarf *Aster dumosus*.



Physalis alkekengi (Chinese Lantern)

Although this plant flowers in mid summer, its resulting brilliant orange seedhead makes it a must for the fall garden. This member of the potato family (Solanaceae) is quick to spread. Given a sunny spot and some good soil, they will be a sight to behold around Halloween when the bright orange seedheads make fitting decorations.



***Sedum spectabile* 'Autumn Joy'**

This plant got its name for obvious reasons. This tall sedum is in full bloom in September, and continues flowering well into October. A great plant for attracting butterflies, this member of the Crassulaceae family is a hardy addition to our fall gardens.

***Rudbeckia laciniata* 'Golden Glow'**

This is another member of the Compositae family, reaching a whopping 6-7 feet high. A hardy perennial producing double golden-yellow flower heads with green centers in late summer/autumn is worthy of a sunny spot at the back of the garden. Another close relative is *Rudbeckia nitida* 'Herbsonne'. Its yellow, daisy-like flower heads with conical green centers are carried singly on tall stems. This species shares the same height and flowering period as its 'golden' cousin.



This list is just a sampling of the many worth-while, late flowering perennials that should be added to our Newfoundland gardens. Using these plants will help extend the flowering season well into October. Let's work toward making the period from the last bloom in fall to the first bloom in spring as short as humanly possible. Happy planting!

Tim Walsh
Nursery Manager/Propagator