

2005 Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association has named "Helleborus x hybridus" 2005 Perennial Plant of the Year. The common name of this marvelous shade plant is Lenten rose. It



Lenten rose (*Helleborus x hybridus*)

is an early-spring flowering member of the buttercup family.

Lenten rose is hardy in Zones 4 and 5. Mature plants can form clumps that are 18 to 24 inches tall and 24 to 30 inches wide. Long lasting blooms are available in many colors and appear as single or double forms. Mature plants often have 50 or more flowers per plant. This perennial performs best in partial to full shade and makes an outstanding plant for adding color, texture and habit to the ornamental landscape.

Lenten roses are easily grown in well-drained, fertile garden soil. The major requirement for optimum growth is good drainage. Even in the driest of seasons, Lenten roses are tough plants that only require occasional watering after they become established. This plant is poisonous and usually not eaten by deer. (MJF)

Climbing, Twining and Vining

This summer plant a flowering vine in the garden to enhance your landscape. A correctly chosen vine can provide cooling shade to your patio, screen out an undesired view and add splashes of color and interest to the yard. In a space too small for a shrub, the height and vertical extension of a climbing vine can make the space feel larger with room to spare.

Vines can break up the monotony of a fence or wall and soften the lines in a harsh transition area. These plants can pull double duty and take on a horizontal plane when used as a groundcover in shaded areas beneath trees where turfgrass is difficult to grow.

When selecting a vine, make sure the plant will satisfy your needs and wants in the landscape. If you would like to completely cover a fence, choose a vine with dense foliage. A fragrant plant may be desired near a patio or a window that is frequently open. To add interest to a bland wall, look for foliage that is unique and has nice fall color. Most vines climb by twining and twisting petioles so they require a trellis or other support system in order to climb. Other factors to take into consideration are hardiness, bloom, spread, height, color, aggressiveness and life cycle.

Annual vines complete their life cycle in one season where perennial flowering vines return each year. Some annual vines include morning glory, moonflower and sweet pea. The following is a list and description of perennial flowering vines that will perform well in southeast Nebraska.

Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) comes in flower shades of yellow,

red or orange. The vine has a vigorous growth rate of 12 to 18 inches annually. The plant can reach 15 feet in height and spread. Foliage is bluish-green, and red fruit is set in the fall. The cultivar 'Alabama Crimson' has bright red flowers, 'John Clayton' has yellow flowers and 'Blanch Sandman' blooms red with a yellow interior.



Sweet autumn Clematis (*Clematis maximowicziana*)

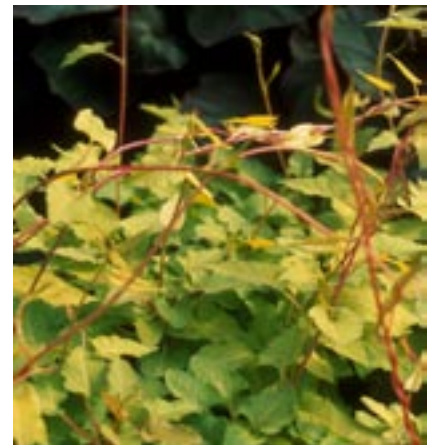
There are over 250 species of **clematis** which can be grouped by season of bloom into three categories: spring, mid-summer and late summer/fall. Clematis like their head in the sun and their feet cool. To achieve this, plants require at least six hours of sunlight a day and should be mulched to keep roots cool. Clematis come in a variety of colors. The large flowered varieties are void of fragrance, but smaller blooming vines like **Sweet autumn Clematis** (*Clematis maximowicziana*) produce fragrant, small white flowers from late summer to fall. This vigorous vine can be maintained with regular pruning.

American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) has glossy green summer foliage followed by red and orange fruits in the fall. In order to have fruits, both the male and female plant must be grown. 'Indian Brave' is a male cultivar and

'Indian Maiden' is one female cultivar that could be selected. Self-pollinating cultivars like 'Swtazam' (Sweet Tangerine TM) are also available. This vine can spread to 20 feet and is adaptable to difficult sites including sandy, dry soil.

Climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea anomala*) is a slow-growing vine that is adaptable to shade or sun and prefers a moist, well-drained soil. Heart-shaped leaves form below the flattened clusters of white flowers that open in early to mid-summer. The older stems of this hydrangea have peeling, cinnamon-colored bark that adds winter interest. The vine can reach 60-80 feet in height and needs adequate support for growth.

Silver-lace vine is often referred to as the mile-a-minute vine due to its rapid growth. A more controlled version is Lemon Lace Vine (*Fallopia* 'Lemon Lace') which has been listed as a 2005 GreatPlants® Release by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. This vine is lemon-colored and has red stems in the early spring and fall. Foamy white flowers are showy in the fall against the bright, heart-shaped foliage. The vine will thrive in full sun or part shade and can grow 5' high and wide in its first year. (CMW)



Lemon Lace (*Fallopia*)

Plant a Moss and Wire Hanging Basket

You can create the same kind of moss-lined baskets at home that you see dripping with flowers in the home and garden magazines. It is easy and a fun project to try.

Start with a wire basket, available at many garden centers and through mail order. Do not go smaller than 14" in diameter. Line the bottom and sides of the basket with sheets of green moss, also available at many garden centers or mail order catalogs. You should put down a thick enough layer that it covers the inside of the basket completely, but not so thick that it takes up room that the plants will need. Cut a round piece of plastic from a garbage bag. Place the plastic liner inside the basket, over the moss. This liner will help keep the plants from drying out to quickly. Pierce three or four drainage holes into the liner's bottom.

To get the lush, full effect of a basket dripping with flowers, you are going to plant the sides of the basket. Start with

four-inch pots of trailing annuals, such as sweet alyssum, lobelia or verbena. Remove the plants from the pots gently. Wrap a plant in a small sheet of plastic, rolling it so it is shaped like a cone. The roots are at the wide end of the cone and leaves at the point of the cone. Now, pierce a hole in the liner, in the side of the basket near the bottom. Working from inside the basket, carefully thread the pointed end of the cone through the hole you've pierced. Pull it through gently until the leafy part of the plant is on the outside of the basket. Then gently pull the plastic cone away from the plant. Continue this procedure all the way around the basket, planting either one or two rows of small trailing plants. If you are planting two rows, complete the first row and then add enough soil to cover the roots.

Once the sides of the basket are planted, you can plant the top. Use a mixture of upright plants, bushy plants and trailing plants to make a pleasing ar-

angement. Suggestions include verbena, impatiens, coleus, petunias, geraniums, fuchsias, marigolds and pansies. Also try some trailing foliage plants, such as vinca major, sweet potato vine, English ivy and a pretty silver-gray leafed plant called helichrysum. If you decided not to plant the sides of the basket, you can encourage trailing plants to spill over the edges by planting them at a slight angle, tipped toward the basket's edge.

Hang the basket in its desired location and water it thoroughly. When baskets are wet, they can be quite heavy, so be sure your hardware is firmly attached to a wall or rafter. Since the basket is over planted, you will have to fertilize and water it more frequently than usual.

Variations of the hanging basket include the half basket and the hayrack. Each of these has a flat side that is mounted on a wall. They can be lined with moss and planted in the same manner as a basket. (MJF)

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

For hanging baskets in cool, shady locations, use tuberous begonias, ferns, impatiens or fibrous rooted begonias in combination with trailing plants, such as English ivy.

Remove old flower heads from annual bedding plants to keep them blooming.

Disbud chrysanthemum flowers to secure large, beautiful blooms on straight, strong stems. To disbud, remove the small side buds along the stems which form in the angles of the leaves. This will allow all of the food reserves to be used for one large flower rather than many smaller ones.

Plant annual flowers in tubs or large containers for the porch or terrace. Make sure there are holes in the container's bottom to provide good drainage.

Remove foliage from spring bulbs after it turns yellow and begins to dry. Set out bedding plants to cover the bare spots using care not to damage the bulbs.

Watch for and control blackspot and powdery mildew on rose foliage.

Use bark mulch 2" deep around young trees to protect them from lawn mower damage.

Spring flowering shrubs such as spirea, viburnum, lilac and forsythia should be pruned as soon as they are done blooming.

Mid to late June is an excellent time to take softwood cuttings of shrubs to start new plants. Some shrubs which can be propagated in this way are spirea, lilac and viburnum.

When you buy nursery stock that is container grown, check the root ball and make sure it is not bound too tightly. A mass of circling roots will stay that way even after it is planted in the ground.

If you do not have much room to landscape, consider using some of the many dwarf varieties available. These are plants that have slow growth and stay small, so there is little pruning maintenance. There are numerous dwarf evergreens, flowering trees and shrubs from which to choose.

Keep a close eye on the quality of your spring crops. Hot weather causes lettuce to bolt and become bitter. Plant a warm season crop as soon as the spring vegetables are harvested.

In most cases, blossom-end rot on tomatoes, peppers, squash and watermelons can be prevented. Do this by maintaining uniform soil moisture by mulching and watering correctly, planting in well drained soil and not cultivating deeper than one inch within one foot of the plant. Also avoid the use of high nitrogen fertilizers.

Continue planting warm season vegetable crops such as beans, squash and cucumbers.

The best time to harvest most herbs is just before flowering, when the leaves contain the maximum essential oils.

Before pouring gasoline into the fuel tank of your lawn mower, garden tiller or other garden equipment, be sure to turn off the engine and allow it to cool for at least five minutes.

Identify garden pests before you attempt to control them. If you decide to use chemical control, read the label carefully.

Bats can be an effective way to control insects. One big brown bat can eat 3,000 to 7,000 insects each night. Attract bats by building and placing bat houses in your yard.

Leftover vegetable and flower seeds may be stored in a cool dry location to be saved for planting next year.

Start a gardening notebook. Pay special attention to those plants which withstand drought conditions. (MJF)