

2007 Perennial Plant of the Year



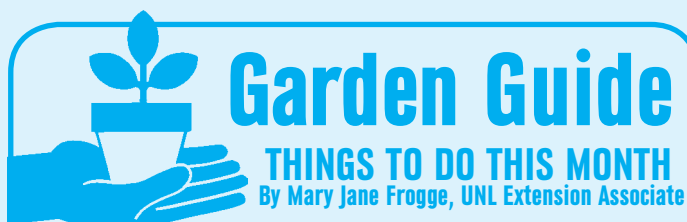
Nepeta "Walker's Low"

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title of Perennial Plant of the Year to Nepeta 'Walker's Low'. Introduced in 1988 in Europe, Walker's Low catmint has become increasingly popular with each passing year due to its lovely blue-violet flowers and its long bloom time, attractive grey-green foliage, ease of propagation, lack of pest or disease problems and low maintenance requirements.

Hardiness - USDA Zones 3 to 8

- Size — 30 to 36 inches tall and wide. Walker's Low is named for a garden and the name is not related to plant size.
- Light — Best in full sun, but can tolerate shade in hot climates.
- Soil — Prefers well drained soil and neutral pH.
- Uses — Good companion plant for early and late blooming plants. Great for perennial borders, but can be used in herb gardens, rock gardens, as a ground cover or as a container plant.
- Unique Qualities — Will bloom continuously throughout the season if properly pruned. Great for attracting bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects, but is deer and rabbit resistant. Leaves release a wonderful aroma when crushed.

Source: Perennial Plant Association



Do not add organic matter to the soil when planting trees. It does not help the plant become established and it may create conditions that encourage the roots to stay inside the planting hole instead of spreading to surrounding soil. Do dig a large planting hole, but fill it with the original soil removed from it.

The last Friday in April is National Arbor Day. Plant a tree or support an organization which does.

Prune spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia and spirea after they have completed flowering.

Remove sticks, rocks and other debris from your lawn to prevent damaging your lawnmower or injuring yourself when mowing. Check your lawnmower and other lawn-care equipment in preparation for the coming season.

Put a birdhouse in the garden to attract insect eating friends.

Seed bare spots in your fescue or bluegrass lawn.

Scatter annual poppy seeds in flower borders. The fine seeds need not be covered. The plants grow rapidly and provide colorful flowers in early summer.

In a sunny location with poor soil, plant nasturtiums for a colorful show. They require warm soil to sprout and start blooming in about 50 days. Too much water and fertilizer produces excess leaves and few flowers.

When chrysanthemums show signs of life, dig up and divide large plants. Discard woody portions and replant divisions 12 to 15 inches apart.

Cut flower stalks back to the ground on daffodils, hyacinths and other spring flowering bulbs as the flowers fade. Do not cut the foliage until it dies naturally. The leaves are necessary to produce strong bulbs capable of reflowering next year.

Measure the rainfall with a rain gauge posted near the garden so you can tell when to water. The garden needs about one inch of rain per week from April to September.

Consider planting flowers which may be dried for winter arrangements. Some of the best are strawflower, statice, celosia and globe amaranth.

Do not restrict yourself to buying plants in bloom. Petunias that bloom in the pack are often rootbound or overgrown and after planting will actually be set back and cease to bloom for about a month. Plants without blossoms will actually bloom sooner and will grow better as well.

To extend the blooming period of gladiolus, plant early, middle and late-season selections each week until the middle of June. Choose a sunny location and plant the corms four to six inches deep and six to eight inches apart.

Gardening Trends in 2007

Whether you're just getting into gardening, trying to streamline your gardening activities, or wanting to have a landscape and plants reflective of the times, being aware of the latest gardening trends can help.

This past year Chris Beytes, the editor of a professional growers magazine, described several specific trends which reflect four main traits of new gardeners and their gardening. For starters, we are no longer gardening as in past generations, nor will kids today garden as we do. Related to this is the fact that many are actually decorating instead of gardening. For many, it's no longer about planting, watering, pruning. This can be considered work, even if there is time for such activities.

The new "luxury consumer" has and wants nice things. This consumer often skimps on one thing so they can splurge on another. Then there is "hiving", using the home as the business center of a busy life, complete with media, internet, fitness and the like. This is the outgrowth of the former "cocooning" and "nesting."

There are at least a dozen specific trends in gardening:

- **Blurring of lines.** It is no longer clear what is annual or what is perennial. Tropicals are planted as annuals, as are some woody plants. It is more about end effect.
- **Tall.** From pots to plants, tall is more popular now than in previous years. Ornamental grasses are a perfect fit.
- **The tropical look.** Tropical plants and those that look tropical with exotic foliage or flowers, have been around a few years and are still



Hibiscus

popular. Cannas, alocasias and hibiscus are popular examples.

- **Big and bold.** Perhaps an outgrowth of tropical, this is now seen in bright colors, bold color combinations and big foliage such as with some of the new coleus. This trend, as well as the tropical and others, reflects a global fusion of cultures.
- **Foliage.** Perhaps another outgrowth of tropical, plants just for foliage are popular. There are almost too many coralbells to choose from, the new ones are grown for leaves rather than the flowers of older cultivars. Coleus and hosta are popular, as are foliage colors such as yellows and black.
- **Perennials.** Perhaps not as popular as a decade ago, they still are favored by many more now with annuals, as container plants, for low maintenance or for specific uses.
- **Native plants.** These are a growth area of perennials. A trend within native plants is choosing one native to specific areas or habitats. This trend reflects the desire to balance technology with nature, to seek calm, to find sustainability.
- **Organics.** This trend has

taken off with foods and is spilling into the landscape and gardening choices as well.

- **Hardscaping.** This is the term for decks, walks, raised beds, patios, stone bed edges and the like. You don't have to look far in most neighborhoods to see such examples.
- **Bringing the indoors out.** This is related to the decorating and hiving already mentioned. More each year are turning the outside into living, even work, spaces.
- **Indoor decorating.** Plants are being used indoors not because they are plants, but for their design element, to add color, texture and accent to the surroundings.
- **Nostalgia.** Old-fashioned and heirloom flowers and vegetables evoke memories of and a desire for simpler times in an increasingly complex world. For others, such "retro gardening" evokes a hope and optimism of the past.

The Color Marketing Group is an organization of professionals whose focus is to identify consumer desires in colors, and to provide recommendations for all manner of consumer products. According to them, color choices in general now are warmer and brighter. Specifically, their choices for popular colors now are reds, including a raspberry hue and blues, including bluish green, think relaxation, as from spas and oceans.

When making this year's garden plans and shopping for plants, think of these trends for new ideas, and see if you can spot some in magazines and stores.

Source: Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor, University of Vermont.

Easter Lily Care

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

When buying a lily, look for a plant with flowers in various stages of bloom from buds to open or partially opened flowers. Foliage should be dense, rich green in color and extend all the way down to the soil line. This is a good indication of a healthy root system. Look for a well-proportioned plant, one that is about two times as high as the pot. You also should check the flowers, foliage and buds for signs of insects and disease.

At home, keep your lily away from drafts and drying heat sources such as appliances or heating ducts. Bright, indirect light is best with daytime temperatures of 65 to



Easter Lily

75 degrees F. Water the plant only when the soil feels dry to the touch, do not over water. To prolong the life of the

blossoms, remove the yellow anthers (pollen-bearing pods) found in the center of each flower.

Do not throw away your Easter lily after it is done blooming. You can save the bulb and plant it outdoors. Easter lilies can be replanted outside after the blooms are gone. Plant the Easter lily outdoors as soon as the ground can be worked. Select a sunny site with well drained soil. Set the top of the bulb six inches below the soil surface. Cut off the old flowers, but leave the stem and leaves. Do not cut back the stem until it dies down in the fall, then cut it off at the soil surface. After the soil surface freezes in late fall, mulch the soil and do not remove the mulch until new growth begins in the spring.

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