

THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

I can't believe its October already. Where has the time gone. I think one of the things that make it seem that the summer has gone by too fast is because we really didn't have much of a summer except for the last half of August and the 1st half of September. So in that respect the summer has gone by too fast. But now it's prime bulb planting time and because the soil is moist (is it ever), the days are cool and the soil is still warm it will be easy for you to get your bulbs in the ground and great for your bulbs to get their roots growing before the real cold sets in. And, as I've said many times before, this weather is great for planting and/or moving your perennials, trees and shrubs. So, if you still have some spots where you would like to add a few more plants do it now, you'll be glad you did.

Between the weather and the economy, this year has been, shall I just say, an interesting time for those of us in the garden nursery business. There are fewer and fewer of the smaller, independent nurseries around every year and I just want to stress that while shopping at the big box stores is easy and sometimes cheaper, the independent nurseries are where you will find the more interesting selections and variety, much better quality, better customer service, more knowledgeable staff and a sense of community. Just something to think about.

In this issue I will be talking about a few more beautiful spring bulbs for your garden, the Plant of the Month, Christmas Trees (I know can you believe it), Why Leaves Turn Colour in the Fall, a [Thanksgiving Nursery Sale](#), Perennial Plants to Prune in the Fall and of course the To Do list.

Enjoy!

Bob



Allium Bulgaricum

SPRING BULBS PART 3

Now that October is here it is time to seriously start thinking about choosing and planting your spring bulbs so you will have a wonderful spring display next year. The Natural Gardener still has an excellent selection of bulbs to choose from. We have everything from hyacinths to tulips to narcissus to alliums to fritillaria. Choosing which bulbs to plant and where to plant them can be kind of daunting but we are more than happy to help you make your selections so that you have blooms from early spring right until it's time to plant your annuals. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Tulip 'Eternal Flame'



Not only is the flower beautiful, it looks more like a peony than a tulip, but the foliage is wonderfully variegated.

Tulip 'Mount Tacoma'



Narcissus 'Irene Copeland'



This is a stunning double flowering daffodil.

Fritillaria Persica



Wonderful foliage, wonderful flowers. What's not to like.

Muscari paradoxum



Midnight blue flowers appear in early spring. Plant them with early spring blooming daffodils for a stunning display.

Eremurus 'Cleopatra'



The tangerine coloured flowers on this foxtail lily create an instant WOW effect in the garden. Give it excellent drainage and you will be richly rewarded.

Galanthus woronowii



A slightly taller version of the familiar snowdrop it naturalizes well in the garden.

Ornithogalum nutans



Beautiful starshaped flowers that are also fragrant. The blooms last a very long time as a cut flower. This is an heirloom bulb that has been available since 1594.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Geranium cinereum 'Ballerina'

There are many different cultivars of Geraniums out in the market these days but only a few that I think perform well in the garden with a minimum of fuss. Geranium 'Rozanne' comes to mind but Geranium 'Ballerina' is most definitely one of my favourites. This is a small, mounding geranium with blue-grey foliage and the daintiest pink flowers with beautiful mauve veining. It is the perfect perennial for a rock garden, alpine trough or the front of the border. It begins blooming in early summer and continues right through until the end of summer. If for some reason it stops blooming halfway through the summer just shear it back and it will begin blooming again for you right into fall.



Zone: 5

Light: Full sun to part shade

Soil: well-drained

Height: 8" (20 cm)

Spread: 18" (45 cm)



Close up of Ballerina's flowers

PERENNIAL PLANTS TO PRUNE IN FALL

In case you don't archive the newsletter I thought that I should include this article from last fall for you as it is really helpful with the fall clean up.

To prune or not to prune that is the question. And if I do prune what exactly am I going to prune. I know that some plants need to be pruned and others don't, but which ones. Hopefully I can answer those questions for you. I am a bit lazy at this time of the year and the less I need to do in the garden the better. Not to mention the birds appreciate the seed heads of Echinacea, Gaillardia, Monarda & Rudbeckia. Plants like Heuchera, Asclepias and Chrysanthemums need the old foliage to protect their crowns otherwise they can rot. It is best to leave them until spring. Most sedums add great winter interest as the frost and snow sparkles on their seed heads. Warm weather grasses like Miscanthus & Pennisetum definitely don't need pruning until the new growth appears in the spring. Their stately stems look wonderful limed with frost and snow. If any of the plants you are pruning are diseased don't put them in the compost, discard in the city's green waste. Here is a list of plants that it is best to prune in the fall:

- Bearded Iris. Cut back and discard foliage after the first hard frost
- Gaillardia
- Nepeta
- Columbine
- Corydalis. Cut back after the first hard frost
- Crocosmia. Cut back after the first hard frost
- Helianthus
- Clematis recta. It blooms on new growth so don't be afraid to cut it back hard
- Begonia grandis. Cut back just before the first hard frost to prevent crown rot
- Japanese anemone
- Hollyhocks
- Ligularia
- Thalictrum species
- Centaurea montana
- Penstemon. Trim back in late summer, early fall to encourage basal growth that will protect the crown of the plant
- Peony. Remove any diseased foliage in late summer and the rest after the first hard frost.
- Phlox
- Salvia
- Brunnera macrophylla
- Polygonatum odoratum
- Veronica spicata
- Baptisia australis
- Achillea. Cut back in late summer to encourage new basal growth that will protect the crown of the plant

How beautifully leaves grow old. How full of light and colour are their last days. ~John Burroughs

I have been writing a garden blog and wanted to remind you to check it out at blog.thenaturalgardener.com



We are also on [Facebook](#). You can find us at The Natural Gardener Garden Store.

The Natural Gardener now has a website for those of you with smartphones like the I Phone or Blackberry. The website is structured for ease of use on your smartphone. Check it out when you have a chance:

www.thenaturalgardener.mobi

BOTANICAL LATIN

In our continuing quest to understand what the heck the latin names of our favourite plants mean here is the next word of the month:

CERNUUM – meaning bending or drooping. Example: Allium cernuum – nodding onion.

**Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn.
~Elizabeth Lawrence**

October To Do List

- Replace spent annuals with winter pansies, winter kale and/or grasses
- Prepare soil for autumn planting
- **Plant spring bulbs**
- Dig and store tender bulbs like Dahlias & Cannas
- Rake and remove fallen leaves
- Cut back spent perennials / biennials
- Stop pruning roses
- Fertilize trees, shrubs and perennials one last time as this will produce stronger plants next spring
- Plant peonies, poppies and irises
- Add winter mulch
- Divide and transplant perennials and ground covers
- Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, ground covers and vines
- Transplant roses
- Plant bare-root roses

**Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting
and autumn a mosaic of them all. ~Stanley Horowitz**

The Chemistry of Autumn Colour

We have all marvelled at the wonderful colours produced by some of the trees we have in the city, especially the Maple trees, Katsura trees and Ginkgo trees. But what causes the leaves of these trees to produce such beauty in the fall. The following is a short article from the UK's The Garden magazine.

The changing colours of autumn leaves are due to shifts in the concentrations of three types of photosynthetic pigment: chlorophyll, carotenoids and anthocyanins.

- **Chlorophyll** – the main photosynthetic pigment and responsible for the green colour of most leaves. This is because blue and red light are absorbed in the process of photosynthesis.
- **Carotenoids** – mainly yellow or orange pigments these play a secondary role in photosynthesis. Chlorophyll usually masks their colour.
- **Anthocyanins** – red and purple pigments that are by-products of photosynthesis. In some plants, anthocyanins dominate so leaves are purple or red. Two examples of these would be the copper beach and the Emperor 1 maple.

Leaves with Greens and Yellows

In autumn, triggered by shorter days and lower temperatures, chlorophyll production in deciduous plants slows. A layer of semi-permeable cells, the abscission layer (which will cause the leaf to drop) begins to form at the base of the leaf. The chlorophyll still in the leaf gradually breaks down, revealing yellow and orange carotenoid pigments.

As autumn progresses, carotenoids also break down, while red and purple anthocyanins are produced from the breakdown of surplus sugars whose movement out of the leaf is inhibited by the abscission layer.

These changes in pigment concentration explain the range of autumn colours. The concentrations vary in intensity due to genetic differences between species and between individuals of the same species.

Environmental conditions are also vital however, which explains why plants of the same species produce more spectacular colours in eastern North America than here on the West Coast.

Leaves with Reds and Purples

Intense red and purple autumn colours are due to the high concentration of anthocyanins. Their production is favoured by:

High light levels

Low temperatures – Cold but not freezing temperatures increase anthocyanin levels and inhibit movement of sugars out of the leaves so more remain to be converted into pigments. Higher rainfall is thought to lead to lower levels of anthocyanins.

The brilliant autumn foliage colours of New England and Eastern Canada are the result of bright, dry, sunny autumn days combined with cool nights. The more muted colours on the West Coast reflect our cooler, wetter and more overcast conditions.

THANKSGIVING NURSERY SPECIAL

On **October 8th, 9th & 10th** all perennials, vines, trees, shrubs, herbs and vegetables in the nursery will be **50% off!** (except for winter pansies & bulbs). Come by and take home a treasure or two.

A woodland in full color is awesome as a forest fire, in magnitude at least, but a single tree is like a dancing tongue of flame to warm the heart. ~Hal Borland

CHRISTMAS TREES

Once again The Natural Gardener is bringing in fresh cut Christmas Trees from Chilliwack. For your added convenience we are again taking pre-orders. These Christmas Trees are cut the day before I have them delivered so you know they are FRESH and won't be dropping needles all over the house. Just call, e-mail or drop in to the store and let us know which tree you would like. This year, due to the cost of gas, there will be a \$10.00 delivery fee.

Upon the advice of my Christmas Tree grower I will once again be carrying a new Christmas tree this year to replace the Grand Fir. It is called the **CANAAN FIR** and a full description of it follows. Unfortunately the 5' Canaan Firs are not available this year so they will be replaced by the 5' Grand Fir.

Below is the list of trees we will be carrying, the amounts we are bringing in and the cost of the different types and sizes of trees. We sold out of all our trees last year so don't wait too long to order yours.

TYPE	SIZE	AMOUNT	COST
Grand Fir	5'	6	39.00
Canaan Fir	6'	4	45.00
Canaan Fir	7'	8	60.00
Noble Fir	5'	8	55.00
Noble Fir	6'	12	67.00
Noble Fir	7'	13	79.00
Noble Fir	8'	2	95.00

Please note that nearly all the tree sizes have not increased in price this year. Pictures and descriptions of the trees are on the next page.



Noble Fir



Canaan Fir

The **Noble Fir** is the Queen of the Christmas Trees. It is an elegant tree, with a classic layered look to it. The branches are sturdy and the needles are soft which makes hanging ornaments fun and easy.

The **Canaan Fir** is very unique in that it shares the best characteristics of the Fraser Fir and the Balsam Fir. The appearance closely resembles a Fraser Fir. The needles are short, soft, and rounded with a dark green topside and a silver accent underneath. The Canaan is a slightly tapered, but full tree. The branches are thick and sturdy, but still leave enough room to hang ornaments and lights closer to the center of the tree. One of the best things about Canaan Firs is that when properly looked after they will maintain freshness and needle retention right through the Christmas season. Most importantly Canaan Firs are wonderfully fragrant with the same fragrance as the Balsam Fir whose scent is considered the 'smell of Christmas'.



Thank you for taking the time to read this month's newsletter. Enjoy the October fall days in your garden and have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

Happy Gardening!

Bob

