



March 2010

## Plants of the Month

Peas – Garden, Snap (edible pod), or Snow (flat edible pod)

*Pisum sativum* var. *sativum*

Nothing gets raves like spring peas fresh from the garden. Loving it cool and temperate (65-70 degrees), they happily produce in spring. Although they are legumes, peas fix little nitrogen with their roots, so before planting incorporate a balanced fertilizer into soils. Keep pH above 6.0. Pre-germination gives them a head start. Space seeds every 1-3 inches in early spring when soil temperatures reach at least 40 degrees. (Lower temperatures cause delay and rot.) Bushy determinate pea varieties reach 3 feet or less in height; indeterminate types can grow over 5 feet. Plant in double rows 3-10" apart so plants hold each other upright, or use a fence or short trellis to support them.



Broomsedge

*Andropogon virginicus*

Feel good when you see this native grass in old abandoned fields or on roadsides. It has started the long process of creating a natural environment by being a “pioneer” plant in disturbed and bare soils. Growing to about 3 feet, its small clumps of stems turn from green to a warm rusty-gold for winter. When backlit by the sun, the fluffy seedheads popping out all along the stem glow like stars. Best in infertile soil, full sun, and planted in sweeps, this is a plant to broadcast or let volunteer in meadows or semi-wild spots. Laughs at drought and doesn’t want mulch.



**Do you have a plant or insect pest question? Call the Home and Garden Information Center 1-800-342-2507**

## **Moth Orchid**

*Phalaenopsis* spp.

Is it possible that such a strikingly beautiful and exotic flower is so easy to grow? The answer is Yes! *Phalaenopsis* or Moth orchids are the perfect choice for the beginner orchid grower. They require similar growing conditions to African violets: bright filtered light, normal room temperatures, and moderate water. They also like high humidity, which can be provided by placing the container on a tray of moist pebbles. Native to tropical areas, they grow on rocks or tree limbs in the wild. In pots, use special orchid potting soil. With proper care, plants can be kept in bloom for months at a time.



## **Comfrey 'Hidcote Blue'**

*Symphytum* 'Hidcote Blue'

The gardener's nemesis—dry shade—requires a tough, tough plant and *symphytum* more that meets the challenge. An excellent groundcover, *symphytum* laughs at drought and flourishes in sun to bright shade. The coarse hairy leaves stay green all growing season. Spring is the highlight with multitudes of pendulous blossoms, part white, blue and pink, that look fabulous interplanted with white daffodils. Spreading by rhizome and seed, *symphytum* will fill in thickly, creating an 18" tall patch. Rate of spread is moderately fast but not difficult to control. The yellow-flowered grandiflorum species has shiny leaves and grows only to 8".

