

July 2009

## Plants of the Month

### Nasturtium

*Tropaeolum majus*

Trumpet-shaped nasturtiums are held well above charming lily pad-like foliage. This annual flower has a vining, trailing, or bushy habit and lovely in hanging baskets, containers, beds, even vegetable gardens. Blooms range from rich red, orange, and dark mahogany to pale yellow and peach in terrific contrast to the blue-green leaves. Edible foliage and flowers add a peppery flavor to salads. Sow seeds after last frost or plant transplants in full sun to partial shade, average, well drained soil. Too much fertilizer promotes foliage at the expense of flowers. Nasturtiums like cool weather and look spectacular in late summer to early fall, attracting hummingbirds



### Canadian Ginger, Wild Ginger

*Asarum canadense*

Ignore the name. This is a woodland native found on our East Coast from South Carolina on north. The green-gray kidney-shaped leaves rise on 4-6 inch stems, making a tight overlapping groundcover. Spreading slowly but indefinitely, this deciduous plant grows in light to dense shade and rich acid soil. In spring, its peculiar "little brown jug" of a flower squats below the foliage where it's not showy. However, Canadian ginger will seed occasionally into a new spot it likes, which is cause to rejoice. You can leave it there or easily transplant it elsewhere.



## Southern Magnolia

*Magnolia grandiflora*

A sense of gentility surrounds this stately 60-80 foot evergreen, but it is the original steel magnolia. Native to Maryland, bitter winter temperatures can knock it back yet it can return to life. Its huge white flowers are especially prized for appearing in summer when flowering trees are fewer. Three to five inch “cones” of red berries ripen in the fall. These and the huge glossy leaves are favorites for winter holiday decoration. Southern magnolias like sun to semi-shade and rich, acid soil that is well-drained but can be quite wet. Site where protected from winter wind and sun.



---

## Sensitive fern

*Onoclea sensibilis*

Not so sensitive, this native fern can be downright rambunctious when planted in moist semi-shade. Still, sensitive fern forms a beautiful 1-3 foot tall mass or groundcover. The unusual frond leaflets are solid, not lacy as most ferns. In late summer, it sends up fertile fronds with no leaflets, covered with brown spore cases that give the fern its other common name—bead fern. These persist in winter. Sensitive fern spreads by spore or rhizomes. It can hold its own in a patch of pachysandra. The more moisture it gets, the more sun it tolerates. Deer leave it alone.

