

May 2008

## Plant Picks of the Month

### Large-flowered Clematis

*Clematis*

Dreaming of a cottage garden? Twine a large-flowered clematis vine on an arbor or trellis. Prized for their showiness, large-flowered clematis offer myriad colors in spring or summer. Most are deciduous, with a fuzzy long-haired seed head that remains after flowers fade and provides interest all winter. For abundant flowers, plant in a sunny, well drained site, being sure to provide the root zone with shade. Add compost or June well rotted manure and a handful of bonemeal to planting hole soil. A general shrub fertilizer can be used in spring but not while your clematis is blooming.



### Eastern Redbud Tree

*Cercis Canadensis*

With stunning spring-flowering trees around every bend in the road, our native redbud still stands out. A profusion of fuchsia blossoms run along its branches, highlighting them in a unique way. *Cercis Canadensis* is well adapted to Maryland soils, but prefers moist, well drained soil. Woodland edges or partially shaded locations are best. With a mature height of 25 feet, it can be planted under utility wires. The lush green, broad, heart-shaped leaves and slender reddish brown bark with orangish inner bark peaking through, makes Redbud a lovely and interesting addition to the landscape.



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## Ostrich fern

*Matteuccia struthiopteris*

No backyard forest primeval is complete without lush feathery ferns. In Maryland none is taller than our native Ostrich fern. With the moist soils and full to partial shade they prefer, they can reach heights of two to a whopping six feet. In addition, unfurled fronds, known as fiddleheads, are edible. They arise each spring from a permanent crown and can be harvested to provide tasty greens--raw, cooked or even pickled. In its ideal conditions, Ostrich ferns spread vigorously by rhizomes, so plant away from less assertive plants. The spore-carrying fronds are stiff, brown and remain upright in winter.

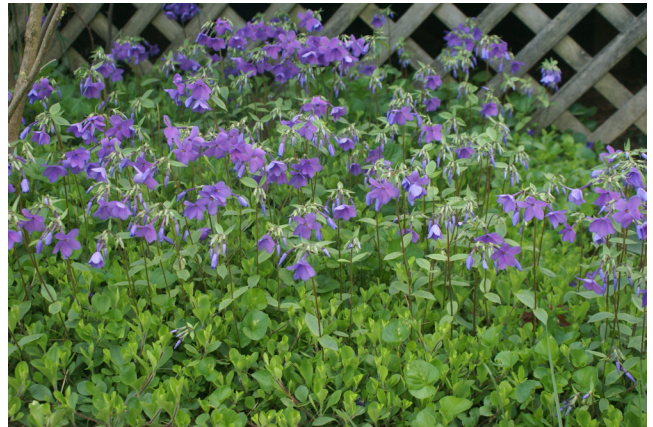


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## Creeping Phlox

*Phlox stolonifera* 'Sherwood Purple'

This under-utilized gem of a phlox creates a ground-hugging mat of small evergreen leaves that carpet the ground all year. In May, creeping phlox sends up slim stems about 6-8" tall, topped with clusters of traditional phlox blooms in shades of purples, pinks or white. Bloom is lightly fragrant and beneficial to butterflies. 'Sherwood Purple' is the best variety to choose when you want to use it as a ground-cover. For those seeking a native alternative to evergreen vinca, Phlox stolonifera fits the bill. This unpicky phlox likes shade and moisture, but tolerates dry periods.



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