



October 2009

Plant Picks of the Month

Hercules Club, Japanese Angelica Tree/ Devil's Walking Stick

Aralia elata/ Aralia spinosa

Sometimes flowers don't give you the biggest bang. True, the huge flower heads of Hercules club are attractive over the summer, but the biggest show follows in fall. Deep purple berries, soon snapped up by birds, mingle with a cloud of starry pink flower structures known as infructescences. Together the effect is dreamy. The long compound leaves turn yellow to purple in fall. Trunks are spiny. A better choice than the 30-50 foot Japanese Angelica is our native aralia. *Aralia spinosa* is known as Hercules club, too, but also as Devil's walkingstick. Similarly beautiful, it is a large shrub or small tree at 20 feet. *Aralias* sucker and do well in a shrub border or natural area.



Fall Blooming Anemone, Japanese Anemone

Anemone x hybrida

Move over chrysanthemums and pansies. Make way for an uncommon addition to the fall line-up of spectacular plants. A pleasant surprise awaits when anemones begin to bloom in late August--and bloom and bloom up through the first frost. This is a large genus of perennials with single and double blossom varieties. Cultivars are available in many shades of pink, and fans of white flowers will love the pure, white color that really brightens the garden. Slow to establish, after two to three years anemones flower prolifically. They can spread a lot in ideal conditions. Anemones prefer shelter from hot afternoon sun and well drained soil amended with compost. Plant them in the spring.



Pineapple Sage

Salvia elegans

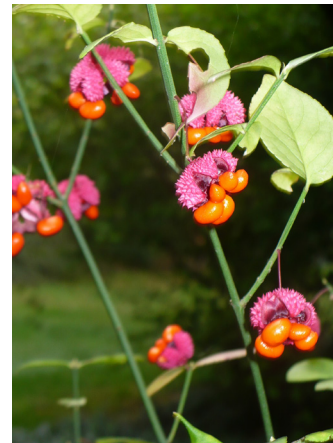
When most plants are going dormant, pineapple sage peaks. In late summer to early fall this herb produces spikes of bright, red, tubular flowers which are hummingbird and butterfly magnets. Foliage is light green, fuzzy, and has a pineapple fragrance when touched. Crushed leaves can be used to flavor teas and drinks. Flowers are edible, too, and can be used in salads and desserts. Grow pineapple sage in herb gardens, beds, borders, and containers. It has an open, airy growth habit to about 3 feet. Pinch to keep bushier. Plant in spring after danger of frost in full sun with well drained soil. This perennial herb is grown as an annual in our area. Propagate by taking cuttings in the summer.



Hearts-a-Burstin'

Euonymus americanus

Eyes pop when seed pods pop on this native euonymus. The clashing magenta and orange seed pods draw many a startled stare. Its 3-6 foot stems are green and unremarkable with sparse foliage. But in early fall, its small greenish spring flowers mature into pink ¾" warty pods. They split open, dangling 3-5 pumpkin-orange seeds. For the greatest impact, plant several Hearts-a-Burstin' in a group where you can view them close-up. A solid backdrop adds drama. This deciduous forest shrub likes part to full shade. Not invasive like its Asian relatives, it increases by suckers or seed. Hardy to zone 6a.



Pansy, Heart's-ease

Viola x wittrockiana

As soon as days cool, get pansies in the ground to cheer up your coming winter. Color choice is legion. Whereas in the past, the "face" patterns and two-toned cultivars were most popular, today gardeners go for bigger blooms and play with color combinations. Pansies hate heat but want full sun to light shade. They bloom when temperatures are below 75 degrees, survive through freezing, then rebound with new late winter to spring bloom. Protect roots from heat and bitter cold by mulching around, not on, plants. Purchased transplants establish better when they have buds, rather than fully opened flowers. They can also be grown from seed.



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