



July - August - September 2025

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447 Winthrop Road, Deep River, CT. 06417

Phone – (860) 526-9056

Website – www.acergardens.com

Email – acer@acergardens.com

It's hard to believe we have finally arrived at the long, bright days of high summer. Many gardens are already overgrown due to the early warmth and the frequent rains. There is always something to do in a garden but the eternal beauty of high summer is that you really don't have to do anything! And you shouldn't! These lovely, still, quiet mornings are a special gift to the gardener. They are to be savored and treasured for they cannot be replaced. Sit quietly in the garden you have worked so hard to make and enjoy what you have created. Watch the butterflies and the birds as they show you how they have established their own routes to pleasure in your garden. Listen to your garden as a breeze stirs the leaves. You have made a peaceful and special place that no one else can replicate. Congratulations!

Although gardening chores are never really done, now is the time to sit quietly and enjoy the garden you have created. A special sitting area with comfortable chairs or benches will give you the opportunity for rest and relaxation. Replant containers to try out different floral color schemes ... it's an easy way to see how a larger flower bed might look! You can also surround the sitting area with ferns, grasses, heucheras, mints, hostas and sedums for a study in foliage combinations. A number of herbs and plants (such as lavender, lemon balm and santolina) naturally repel many insects and are good choices to plant near your sitting area. Whatever you choose should reflect what makes your garden special to you.

Some gardeners are already looking ahead to late summer and fall and the subtle color shifts that come to many gardens. As the sun changes position in late summer, some flower beds may not get as much sun as they did earlier in the season. Tucking in some fall-blooming, shade-tolerant plants will help you extend the season.

You've worked very hard on your garden and you deserve the chance to take a break and let the garden refresh your spirit. Why not share the pleasure your garden gives you with your friends? Invite them to come and walk around with you exchange information on the different plants you grow, and why, and share what you have learned. Hopefully, your friends will invite you to tour their gardens and see what they are growing. This is a perfect opportunity to exchange information and widen your perspective.

Visit the Web Site

Our web site is a great resource for information including the current Newsletter and our Information Handouts which include sheets on Plants, Seasonal, How To's and Challenges. Take a few minutes to browse through them and print out some easy reading! You'll also find announcements on upcoming talks and workshops as well as videos. Please sign up for our Newsletter too. We're always interested in hearing what our customers would like to see on the web site and what would be most helpful to you. By all means let us know, by email, what you'd like to see covered! Just remember: we don't have full-time office coverage because we like to spend the season down in the Nursery with you. We'll get back to you as soon as we can!

Plant of the Month

The Plant of the Month is available the first of each month, starting in April, at the nursery, near the checkout table. These plants are carefully chosen to feature current bloom times and to serve as an accent in your garden. Try something new!

July : Echinacea (Coneflower)

Zone: 3-9 Height: 24-48" Spread: 24-36"

These hardy prairie plants are long-blooming and drought tolerant and feature a wide range of colors including white, pink and purple. Planted in full sun, they will bloom from mid-summer to fall and appreciate dead-heading. They will self-seed; large clumps should be divided every three years. Deer-resistant, they attract birds and butterflies. Some gardeners leave the plants standing through the winter and then shear them back in the spring to make bushier plants.

August: Vernonia (Ironweed)

Zone: 5-9 Height: 4-6' Spread: 3-4'

This tall (4'+) perennial thrives as a background plant, standing straight and showcasing its purple flowers from late summer to the killing frosts. Vernonia is fond of damp locations and is often seen growing wild along the banks of marshes. Sun-loving, it is attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. Heat and humidity tolerant, Vernonia is at its best planted in drifts to display its remarkable purple flowers.

September: Physostegia (Obedient Plant)

Zone: 3-9 Height: 24-48" Spread: 24-36"

These rosy-pink or pale purple tubular flowers, resembling both snapdragons and foxgloves, grow best in well-drained soil and full sun. They flower from the base of the stem up and combine well with blue lobelias. Deer resistant, hummingbirds and butterflies are constant companions. If bent gently into a new position, the plant will stay put for a short time ... hence its name!

Tips for High Summer Gardening

Delphiniums, nepeta, salvia, coreopsis, buddleia, kalimeris, daylilies and annuals all benefit from July fertilizing. August fertilizing is generally considered too late in the season for this area.

By mid-July, you should have cut back your mums, asters, sedum and Montauk daisies to keep them under control and to ensure good branching.

Some annuals slow down their blooming as the summer progresses. Cut them back by at least half, fertilize, water and wait a few weeks. They'll come back quickly!

Dead-head perennials regularly to extend blossom time and encourage late-season re-bloom.

If you are planting, plant late in the day, not in the hot sun, and be sure to water in deeply.

Houseplants spending time outdoors in the summer will probably need more water than they do during the winter months inside. Trim, fertilize and re-pot if necessary towards the end of August and bring them back inside on or near Labor Day.

Re-apply slug bait around hostas as the season progresses.

Feed/ fertilize roses and containers on a regular schedule.

Turn containers regularly to keep them growing evenly.

Control broad leaf weeds in the lawn and apply fertilizer in late August-early September.

Weed, weed, weed! They won't go away on their own!

Re-Blooming Flowers

Plant breeders have worked very hard to give us re-blooming varieties within a species (daylilies, for instance, add re-bloomers every year!) but you have to choose carefully. Some plants are natural rebloomers: echinacea, rudbeckia, gaillardia, gaura, salvia, monarda and some of the oriental lilies). As gardeners, we like to have long-blooming flowers in the garden ... but re-bloomers are different.

Long-bloomers: these perennials flower for one extended period, usually several weeks or even months, providing continuous color and interest to your garden.

Re-bloomers: these perennials have the ability to flower multiple times throughout a single growing season, often with a main flush of blooms followed by one or more smaller flushes of bloom during the course of the gardening year.

The majority of re-bloomers are perennials but there are also roses, vines and even some shrubs which will re-bloom dependably. You have to read the tags and do your homework! Look into:

Perennials

Astilbe	Delphinium	Gaillardia	Sage
Beebalm	Dianthus	Nepeta	Salvia
Bleeding Heart	Dicentra	Phlox paniculata	Scabiosa
Coreopsis	Echinacea	Rudbeckia	Shasta daisy
Daylily	Gaura	Russian Sage	Yarrow

Vines

Black-eyed Susan	Mandevilla
Clematis Jackmanii	Morning Glory
Honeysuckle	Trumpet vine

Roses and Shrubs

Knockout roses	Drift Roses	Endless Summer hydrangeas
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Flowers that bloom again require very little extra care but deadheading spent blooms will encourage the re-blooming. Use a fertilizer with low nitrogen (5-10-5) so that the plant makes flowers, not foliage.

The Meadow Look for the Edge of the Garden

If you have the natural terrain for a meadow and the available time to spend in creating and maintaining one, you are in luck! But many Connecticut gardeners would like to have only a slightly more naturalistic look to the edges of the garden as it merges into the wider landscape rather than a real meadow. Fortunately, it is actually quite easy to do this!

The aim of this meadow look is to merge your "organized" garden into the wider landscape. Hopefully, that edge is already established with trees, evergreens and bushes. Even a fence would create a boundary or background. Now you need to space grasses and plants along that boundary to lead the eye towards it without creating a dramatic look! You're aiming for a quiet transition so the grasses you pick should have a loose and free-flowing appearance and should remain un-cut all winter. The plants you select should have that same slightly undisciplined look. They need to be adaptable and good neighbors. Fortunately, the

selection is very wide and can include native wildflowers as well as some perennials. Most gardeners find that a ratio of 60-65% grasses to 35-40% flowering plants is about right. You can always adjust those numbers to suit your particular site as you establish the “look” you want. Consider a selection from:

<u>Flowers</u>		<u>Grasses</u>	
Coreopsis	(Coreopsis)	Calamagrostis	(Feather Reed)
Echinacea	(Coneflowers)	Miscanthus	(Maiden Grass)
Eupatorium	(Joe Pye Weed)	Panicum	(Switch Grass)
Liatris	(Liatris)	Pennisetum	(Fountain Grass)
Monarda	(Bee Balm)	Schizachyrium	(Little Blue Stem)
New England Aster	(Aster spp.)		
Rudbeckia	(Black-eyed Susan)		
Solidago	(Goldenrod)		
Yarrow	(Achillea)		

Save Time in the Garden

Unfortunately, gardens don’t take care of themselves! Summer brings many demands on the gardener’s time so since there’s no switch to flip (the one that says “The garden will now weed itself, deadhead and edge”) we need to give ourselves a break and make our gardens as low maintenance as we can. There are a few ways to give yourself a head start ... most of them are just common sense solutions! They won’t all apply to your garden ... and you might have a few tricks of your own!

Plant in mass. Plant fewer varieties but plant more of them. You’ll reduce maintenance and increase impact at the same time.

Group plants with similar moisture needs together. Drought-resistant plants (deep tap roots and small leaves) don’t need as much water as the larger leaved plants and they don’t need it as often. Designing beds with plants that have similar watering needs will help cut down on time spent dragging the hose around!

Don’t put thirsty plants in hard-to-reach places. If you must have that thirsty plant, put it near the water source not as far away from it as you can get! Give yourself a break!

Try not to grow re-seeders. If you must have some of them (malva, rudbeckia etc.) stay on top of the deadheading.

Pull weeds when the soil is moist and save your energy.

Try to use shrubs that require little to no pruning.

Summer Flowering Bushes

Beautiful, low-maintenance, hardy ... those words describe many summer flowering bushes! But they bring so much more to the party! Their sequence of bloom and good staying power add depth and character to the garden. These bushes can easily become the backbone of your garden.

Many require almost no maintenance and thrive in high temperatures and humidity. Most are fragrant, long-bloomers followed by interesting fall foliage and, often, berries for the birds. Because they tend to be fast-growers they will also provide privacy.

Long-blooming summer shrubs can give a dependable backdrop to your high summer garden. Many require almost no maintenance and thrive in high temperatures and humidity. Most are fragrant, long-bloomers followed by interesting fall foliage and, often, berries for the birds. Planting them near your sitting area can provide both privacy and fragrance. On-going maintenance is low but all summer-blooming shrubs appreciate extra watering during a prolonged dry spell.

Try some of these:

Abelia (Glossy Leaf Abelia)

Grows 3' - 5' tall

Full sun

Drought-tolerant

Pink flowers from July to frost on the tips of new growth. Prune back in spring to keep bush from getting stringy. Insect problems are rare. Arching branches give the bush a graceful effect.

Buddleia davidii (Butterfly Bush)

Can reach 6' – 8'

Full sun to partial shade

Wide color range

Constant summer blooms attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Should be cut to 18" late spring but blooms on new wood. Untouched by disease and extremely pest resistant.

Callicarpa dichotama (Purple Beautyberry)

May reach 3' – 4'

Sun to light shade

Well-drained soil

Covered in late summer with pink flowers, followed by purple berries lasting through the winter. Flowers and fruits on new growth so cut to 18" in spring. Considered the most graceful of the species and very attractive to cardinals. Spectacular planted "en masse".

Clethra alnifolia (Summersweet)

Reaches 4 – 6'

Full sun to partial shade

Moist soil

Heavily fragrant, bloom begins in late spring and continues into early fall. Pest and disease free, it will even tolerate shade. Avoid hot, dry sites. Looks well near ponds and streams. Colors range from white to pink with some compact (3' – 4') forms in white.

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf Hydrangea)

Grows 5 – 9'

Will take deep shade

Well-drained soil

Stunning, huge white flowers in June surrounded by deep green, bold leaves. Some bloom as the summer continues. Fall foliage is burgundy-colored. Shrub forms a naturally graceful shape and is well-suited to the edge of woods.

Viburnum (Summer Snowflake)

Grows 4 – 6'

Sun to part shade

Well-drained soil

White flowers bloom from late spring to early October. Excellent for naturalizing. Fall orange-red berries attract birds. Tolerates a wide range of soils and is drought resistant. Shrub will develop a spreading shape.

Ilex verticillata (Winterberry)

Zone: 3 - 9

Height: 3 - 12'

Spread: 3 - 12'

Although bloom occurs in July, this bush is noted for its bright red berries which appear in late summer into fall. Berries remain throughout the winter and add impact to the winter landscape. Birds will be attracted to the bush. Winterberry grows in ordinary soil although it is happiest in moist soil and thrives in full sun to part shade.

Comptonia peregrine (Sweet Fern)

Zone: 2-6

Height: 2 - 5'

Spread: 4 - 8'

Easily grown in full sun to part shade, this bush tolerates poor soil and is a vigorous plant for naturalized areas where it can be left alone to colonize. The foliage is aromatic and greatly resembles ferns. Once established, Sweet Fern is deer resistant, zero maintenance and exceptionally cold hardy. Leaves turn a deep copper color in the fall.

Fill your Summer Days with Daisies

There are some flowers which are able to bring a smile to the face of the busiest gardener ... and daisies lead the list! These hardy, drought tolerant plants, annuals and perennials, are cheerful and easy to grow and on top of that they are reliable bloomers! All they ask is lots of sun and fast-draining soil. Since daisies send up flower buds their entire blooming time they appreciate being watered during dry spells. An application of an all-purpose organic fertilizer early in the season will promote strong, sturdy growth. Daisy plants can get very large very quickly so the clumps should be divided every other Fall. Divide the root balls, cut away the thick center, and plant the divisions with a good 10" of space around them.

If you want a daisy that will give you terrific cut flowers you will probably head for Shasta Daisies as they bloom steadily until early fall. As the flowers fade, deadheading will help to extend the blooming season. Divide the Shastas every 2-3 years in late summer or early fall.

One of the great pleasures daisies bring to a garden is their ability to blend with other plants. They belong in every cottage garden but also look well when planted with more formal flowers. The bright colors and attractive leaves make them good companions and neighbors.

Drought and Heat Tolerant Plants

As improbable as it seems after our long, wet winter and spring, the long-range weather forecast for this summer is "hot and dry". Growing reliably heat-tolerant plants in your garden will help you cope with longer dry spells and cut back on your watering needs and dependence on the hose ... but everything needs to start with good soil. Well-drained, loose soil allows roots to grow deep down to where the moisture is held. It's not a good idea to put plants that prefer wet conditions in the middle of a mixed bed! Use native plants where you can; they've already cheerfully adapted to the climate. In general, established perennial flowers require less water than annuals. Good choices include: achillea, agastache, artemisia, columbine, corydalis lutea, echinacea, gaillardia, lychnis, nepeta, oenothera, penstemon, perovskia, salvia, sedum and stachys.

Drought-tolerant doesn't mean you never have to water... in fact, you must water until your plants are settled-in. Establishing good watering practices will help your garden plants grow strong, healthy roots. In general, your garden requires 1" of water per week and a good rain gauge will help you track rainfall. The best gauge is still checking the soil ... stick your finger into the soil 1" down. If it feels dry, water. During hot, dry spells you may need to water more often.

Water in the morning when the air is still, or in the evening, but don't waste your time watering in the heat of the day as most of the moisture will be lost to evaporation and the sun. A single weekly deep soaking is much better for your plants than a daily sprinkling.. Water deeply and get the water to the roots, not onto the leaves. Some gardeners divide their gardens into grids and water 1 grid a day. Water stressed plants will look droopy in the morning or late evening and may have brown edges to their leaves. New plantings will need more attention; a light layer of mulch will help retain the water.

A complete list of **Drought Tolerant Plants**, ranging from perennials, annuals, grasses, vines and shrubs, is available on the web site. And remember, when the heat wave hits, do only what is absolutely necessary in the garden ... don't push yourself. Many gardeners keep an eye on weather reports and water deeply just before the temperatures soar.

The Shady Side

Is there one plant that belongs in every shade garden? Absolutely! hostas are the top-selling perennial because they are simply the best perennial for shade! Not the only one, but the best, and with over 3,000 cultivars to choose from it's not hard to see why! Lush foliage (in every shade of green you can imagine), several months of staggered bloom times and low maintenance make hostas a permanent favorite with shade gardeners. Few hostas will do well in direct sunlight but their different sun/shade requirements depend very much on the color of the leaves. The lighter the foliage, the more sunlight the plant will accept but all hostas need some afternoon shade in order to thrive and mature. Many of their flowers are fragrant. Give them rich, organic, well-drained soil and fertilize in the spring with all-purpose garden fertilizer.

Effective when massed, hostas can also be unique specimen plants in the garden. They can take 4-8 years to mature so be sure to give them plenty of spreading room! (A fully mature 'Blue Angel' can reach a 5' spread which is pretty impressive by anyone's standards!) Small space gardens are perfect for the smaller hosta varieties ... many of them will show well when placed along a garden path or even grown in containers.

All hostas bloom in summer with spikes of white to lavender flowers, some of which can be quite showy. Their large leaves are adept at hiding the dying foliage of early bulbs. Hostas play well with other shade-loving perennials over the course of the gardening season. Start with Solomon's Seal, coral bells, bleeding hearts and ferns. Consider adding alliums and Siberian iris. As the season moves towards fall, cimicifuga can be used as a dramatic background.

Slugs can be a problem but keeping mulch away from the crown of your hostas and using repellents will go a long way towards solving it. The best solution? Attract a toad to your garden ... there is nothing they enjoy more than a nice snack of slug!

Hostas have been growing in Asia since 206 B.C. and in the West since 1829 but they didn't really get started in the U.S. until 1930 when their variegated leaves first attracted attention. But that was like the launching of a rocket! Shade gardeners all over the country sat up and said "I'll have some of those, thank you!" and the propagation race was on. Acer Gardens grows many different hostas and we add to the list yearly but some hostas have stood the test of time and are as eye-catching and dependable as ever. Take a look at

<u>Hosta</u>	<u>Introduced</u>	<u>Hosta</u>	<u>Introduced</u>
'August Moon'	1996	'Minuteman'	1944
'Halcyon'	1961	'Spartacus'	2007
'Hans'	2013	'Sum and Substance'	1980

And then add to or create your own shady oasis!

Roses

Many gardeners think growing roses is hard, demanding, time-consuming etc., etc., etc. but growing roses is easier than you think and the newer roses are a delight to work with. Roses understand real estate: it's all about location! Whether you're doing a separate bed or placing an accent in an established bed, plant your roses in a sunny location (at least 6 hours daily) with good drainage and not near a shade tree. Fertilize them regularly for good flowers and water evenly (try not to get the foliage overly wet) to keep the soil moist. Prune established roses in the early spring and keep an eye out for black spot and those creepy crawly beetles. Sit back and enjoy the flowers!

Some of the older roses do have knobby knees. Fortunately, there are many companion plants that actually help a rose shine. Lavender is a great favorite (and its scent confuses deer) but garden phlox, campanula and nepeta all make good neighbors.

It's easy for gardeners to use the companion planting technique to disguise the knobby brown stems of their roses! Companion planting calls for texture, color and form ... nepeta, for instance, is made for roses. Choose companion plants that require the same growing conditions as the roses: full sun and well-drained soil. Some annuals (angelonia, marigolds, verbena and alyssum) will also fill spaces around roses. Roses love all members of the onion family from alliums to chives ... they actually ward off aphids and help prevent black spot. Although it seems an odd combination, gardeners are actually growing herbs with their roses: parsley, thyme and oregano all help to keep Japanese beetles away. Many gardeners set up a monthly schedule for fertilizing roses. Some cut up banana peels and dig them in lightly around the rose roots to provide extra magnesium and potassium. (If you do this, it's a good idea to stop after mid-August.)

Is there a right way to cut a rose for the house? There are indeed a few tricks for preserving your cut roses:

Cut immediately after the bud stage, when the petals are just starting to open.

Use hand pruners or sharp garden scissors.

Cut roses when they are fresh and (early morning or evening) not in the heat of the day.

Recut the rose stems before you put them into the vase.

Strip off lower stem leaves that might sit in the vase water. Foliage above the water level helps draw up water.

Change the water in the vase frequently ... daily, if possible ... and recut the flower stems every few days to improve water absorption.

Asked to name a favorite rose, Acer staff had a hard time choosing! All roses are so lovely! But ... there are some that have really proven to adapt well to Connecticut gardens, thriving and giving glorious blooms all summer long. Here are the choices:

Sharon

'The Fairy', a polyantha landscape shrub rose grown since 1932. Features cascading clusters of small, double pink flowers.

This rose is low maintenance and more disease and insect resistant than other roses. It requires one deadheading after the first bloom and then blooms until frost! Use it in mass in the garden. Its spreading growth habit attracts butterflies and it combines well with all sun loving perennials and shrubs.

Bill

'Julia Child', a floribunda rose named in honor of The French Chef! Features deep butter-yellow fragrant flowers and blooms constantly.

This rebloomer has good disease resistance. A full sun lover, it is heat tolerant. This rose is often used as a garden accent but will work well in any sunny shrub or perennial garden.

Rosemary

'Bolero', a compact floribunda. An outstanding reliable repeat blooming white rose with hints of salmon pink in the center.

Ultra fragrant, this rose's dark green foliage showcases the flowers to perfection. A reliable repeat bloomer, 'Bolero' has a tidy growth habit and is disease resistant. It combines well with Russian sage, summer-blooming alliums and other perennials.

Night Bloomers

Summer days are busy days and we seem to go in so many directions as we hurry to fit everything in before we find ourselves back in winter! Spending time out-of-doors in the evening comes as a welcome break, offering peace and tranquility at the end of the day. It makes sense to create a quiet space to sit where you can relax, a place where you can enjoy the peaceful sounds of the evening.

Night blooming gardens, or Moon Gardens, are not new to the gardening world but they have grown popular again. Night blooming flowers have the remarkable ability to thrive in low-light situations and many have a fragrance to attract night-active insects and pollinators. White flowers and plants with silvery foliage are particularly restful when seen by the light of the moon. (Since the moon doesn't always cooperate, many gardeners string little solar white lights in the area.) Plants with variegated white-edged leaves will sparkle under night lights. White flowers are the best reflectors of moonlight and show themselves well into dusk against the darkening garden. The classic Moonflower vine (a cousin of the Morning Glory) has blooms which open only as dusk comes on and the flower is gone in the daytime. Choose from flowers with fragrance such as sweet alyssum, iberis, creeping phlox, mock orange, lupines, nicotiana, leucanthemum, white petunias, Montauk daisies and anemone. (Don't use too many competing fragrances!) Give them a backdrop of vines with white flowers such as moonflower, climbing roses and sweet autumn clematis); anchor the space with white-flowered bushes such as hydrangea, clethra or viburnum. A white buddleia will attract garden moths (the night-time butterfly) as twilight turns into evening.

Fill your night-time garden with plants of different heights and habits, shapes and textures. Then promise yourself you will take the time to enjoy quiet evenings in your night-blooming garden.

Grow Great:

Calamintha

This perennial could be one of the most versatile in your entire garden! Averaging 1 – 1 ½' tall, and blooming from early summer until fall, this member of the mint family creates an inviting space with clouds of tiny white blossoms and finely textured foliage. Attractive to pollinators, calamintha asks for full sun and at least 1" of water weekly. (Deer and rabbits avoid it.) Easy to grow, this perennial will happily edge walkways, drape over the edges of containers or serve as a groundcover; it is a good companion for roses.

Salvia

The explosion of flowers that often peaks in June leaves many gardeners longing for something a little restful as we move into high summer. Turn to salvia's blues and purples to bring a little peace to your flower beds! It's incredibly easy to grow: a sun lover, it will tolerate drought once established as long as you water deeply once a week. The flower spikes (2' tall) range from blue and purple to white, pink and red. Faithful deadheading will keep the flowers coming from May to September. It is deer-resistant and loved by pollinators. Divide every few years in early spring.

Veronica (Speedwell)

This carefree and easy-to-grow perennial (12-24") will give you long spikes of flowers from June to August. Colors are available in a wide variety including pinks, purples, blues and whites. Happiest in full sun, Veronica benefits from at least 1" of water weekly. Deadhead to extend the bloom time. The plants can be divided every 3 years in autumn or spring. Veronica attracts butterflies and hummingbirds and is deer and rabbit resistant.

Attracting CT Butterflies Through Fall

Connecticut has an impressive list of native butterflies including admirals, emperors, longwings, snouts, true brushfoots, swallowtails and skippers. Butterflies are sun-loving insects ... you will often see them resting on a flat rock letting the sun warm the "flying" muscles in their bodies. Attracting native pollinators is a fun way to help the environment and, at the same time, benefit your garden.

When planning a garden to attract native butterflies, the two most important considerations are to provide a succession of bloom for them throughout the season and to plant native species. Host plants for the butterfly caterpillars may be different from the adult butterfly nectar sources. Shrubs and trees also play a role in keeping our native butterflies happy. The following lists will help you get started:

Natives

Achillea Geranium
Asclepias Goldenrod
Aster Monarda
Coreopsis Rudbeckia
Echinacea Vernonia
Eupatorium Violets

Shrubs

Bottlebrush Buckeye
Buddleia
Clethra
Hibiscus
Spirea
Viburnum

Trees

Dogwood
Fringe Tree
Heptacodium (7 Sons)

Check out Acer Gardens web site (www.Acergardens.com) for a handout on **Butterfly Magnets** which will give you more ideas on what to grow to attract our native butterflies.

High Summer Natives

As we move into the warmer days of high summer, consider the advantages of adding some native plants to your existing garden. First of all, they are attractive, with long-blooming flowers and interesting foliage. They adapted to CT long ago and, in general, have few care requirements. They are generally insect and disease resistant and support birds, butterflies, pollinators, and wildlife. Many of the natives offer multiple choices, sizes and colors ... it's hard to know where to start! Here are a few dependable choices:

Aruncus dioicus (Goat's Beard)

Zone: 4-8 Height: 4 - 6' Spread: 2 - 4'

This woodland favorite has a size and shape for every occasion! Resembling Astilbe with its tiny white flowers and feathery foliage, it prefers rich, moist soil and rarely needs to be divided. Spent flowers will eventually disappear on their own. The fern-like foliage pairs well with Hostas and other broad-leafed, smooth leaves.

Echinace purpurea (Coneflower)

Zone: 3-8 Height: 2 - 5' Spread: 1.5 - 2'

This adaptable plant grows in full sun to part shade and is tolerant of drought, heat, humidity and poor soil. Perfect for CT! Plants usually re-bloom without deadheading but some self-seeding does occur. Flowers (borne on stiff stems) are available in many shades of pink-purple and are most attractive to pollinators, butterflies and birds. This plant's long bloom period makes it very popular for use in native gardens and as a "mingler" in standard flower beds.

Helenium (Sneezeweed)

Zone: 3-8 Height: 3 - 5' Spread: 2 - 3'

Blooming cheerfully from August to October, Helenium is easily grown in moist, well-drained soil in full sun. A wide size range and blooms in shades of yellow, orange and red make this plant a good "mixer". Deadhead as needed, cut back the plants by 1/2 after flowering and divide the clumps every 3-4 years to maintain vigor. Birds are very attracted to Helenium.

Check out Acer Gardens web site (www.Acergardens.com) for a handout on **Butterfly Magnets** which will give you more ideas on what to grow to attract our native butterflies.

Often-Asked Questions

I grow lots of pink, purple and blue flowers but the beds look jumbled sometimes. Is there a color that would connect everything across the beds?

Oddly enough, one of the best colors to use to connect disparate beds isn't a color! It's white! White helps your eye travel from place to place and the slight variations in color only add to the interest. It also is the last

“color” to fade at twilight so you will always have something of interest to see as night comes on. Plants with silver-gray foliage are also helpful in giving a garden a connected look but a little goes a long way.

I love the look of my containers ... what do I have to do to care for them as summer goes on?

The short answer is water ... every day if necessary during a heat wave! Other than that, caring for containers is really common sense. You're really growing a garden but in a limited space. Fertilize, pinch and prune as you go along. Snipping off the tips will help keep your plants smaller and fuller. Sometimes plants go wild, often at the midsummer mark. Cutting them back by half will keep them in bounds and actually help them. Deadheading helps your plants keep blooming and lets you enjoy the foliage. Check for pests every time you water ... and be sure to look under the leaves too.

My shade garden seems to be all green for much of the season. How can I liven it up?

As the summer moves forward, color combinations in the garden take center stage, and then recede ... often into a sea of green. A blend of green foliage is very restful but every shade garden needs a little “bling” to bring everything together. Mix the textures of your shade plant foliage; ferns alone will give you a huge choice. Adding variegated foliage with markings of white, red and gold will create the illusion of light, especially if planted in groups of threes. Adding chartreuse as an accent can introduce a strong yellow-green, eye-catching punch that provides a focal point as well as a conversation piece. Used in a shaded area, chartreuse plants mimic sunlight and lighten a dark corner. Chartreuse goes with almost every other color and is a wonderful companion plant.

What's the best way to cut flowers for the house?

Cut flowers for the house in the early morning or evening hours and try to choose flowers that are half open. To help your flowers last longer, add 1 Tb. sugar, ½ tsp. of white vinegar and ½ tsp. of bleach into 1 qt. of water and use to fill vases as needed. Your cut flowers will also stay fresh longer if they are not placed in front of an open or sunny window. Change the water as needed.

How can I keep pollinators in the garden for a long season?

Providing extended seasonal blooms for pollinators just takes a little planning. Bees and butterflies will be attracted to many different flowers over the course of the gardening season and will spend a great deal of time in the garden if you provide a selection of their favorites. For example:

Summer: Achillea, agastache, baptisia, buddleia, bee balm, coreopsis, cosmos, echinacea, honeysuckle, hosta, lavender, monarda, nepeta, rudbeckia and thyme.

Fall: Asters, chrysanthemum, dahlias, goldenrod, hyssop, sedum, veronica, zinnias

For more in-depth information on building pollinator gardens, please read Acer Gardens' Information Sheet ... **Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden** ... available on the web site.

How do I prevent re-seeding?

Deadhead faithfully. Few perennials come “true” if left to re-seed but penstemon and echinacea will and you can always use those seeds for new areas of the garden.

What can I add to my garden for a late season bit of punch?

When it comes to “Hey, look at me!” it's hard to beat Hibiscus moschuetos (Hardy Hibiscus)! Slow to emerge in the spring, this shrubby plant in the mallow family can reach 3-5' by the time it starts flowering in late summer. Hibiscus does well in average soil but needs good air circulation, full sun and regular, deep watering to reach its full potential. White, pink, red and bi-color flower combinations last only 1-2 days but they dominate their part of the garden and serve as a focal point. Pinching the shoots of young plants in early summer will encourage branching and flowers will continue almost until frost.

You might think about adding a few red flowers to your garden. A few well-placed red accents can energize borders or add drama to small spaces. (They also signal hummingbirds that nectar is available.) Deep reds create the illusion of depth. Can't decide where to put that red accent? Pot up the plant in a container and move it around the garden to see where it will fit best. Live with it for a little while and then, if satisfied, dig it in!

Some of my perennials have out-grown their allotted space! When can I start dividing?

September is the perfect time to start dividing perennials. Hopefully the heat is coming down, the dew stays late in the morning, the rains are a little more dependable and (because the ground will stay warm for a long time to come) there is plenty of time for newly dug and planted plants to adjust to their new homes. Plan on giving newly divided plants about 6 weeks to acclimate before the first hard freeze. In general, spring-blooming plants are best divided or transplanted in the fall.

Perennials to divide in the fall include astilbe, aconitum, lily-of-the-valley, bleeding heart, daylilies, all irises, and hosta.

Are there some native plants that will bloom well into the fall?

There are many natives that will give extended fall blooming as well as berries, foliage and bark for additional interest. Fall gardens can offer birds and pollinators real help in transitioning from summer to autumn. Asters begin to bloom in August ... many are still going strong in October! Echinacea, rudbeckia, gaillardia, cimicifuga, vernonia and agastache will all give you spectacular displays as we move into cooler weather.

We'd like to choose a few "fall accent" trees to highlight our lawns. What color choices do I have here in Connecticut?

Regular rain in the growing season, the warm sunny days and cool nights of early fall produce the conditions that force green leaves to fade and let color come front and center. Here are some easy choices for colorful additions to your property.

<u>Yellow fall foliage:</u>	River birch	Red maple
<u>Red fall foliage:</u>	Northern red oak	Sugar maple
<u>Mixed fall foliage:</u>	Ohio buckeye	

When can I ease up on watering my plants?

Many gardeners stop watering their plants as temperatures begin to cool down but it's not a good idea. Plants need water as they begin to prepare for the long winter months ... so do the bulbs you plant. As long as a plant has leaves it's making and storing food. Moist soil helps to protect root systems from killing frosts and lets your plants slide into winter on their own schedules. Take advantage of natural rainfall but don't put the hoses away too soon.

What to Cut Back When

By the time a Connecticut gardener gets to early August what was an abundant garden can suddenly get to look a little tired, or straggly or just overgrown. Flowers may be flopping all over their allotted garden space. Don't despair! Even if you have already planted long blooming perennials you can still extend the growing season. There are some perennials which, when cut back in late July or early August, can be reinvigorated and will bloom again. That last burst of new color will take you to fall. Don't prune plants already setting buds for next year. If you can see fresh growth emerging at the base of the plant, a light haircut is in order. Try:

Cranesbill geranium (Think of 'Rozanne'). Cut the foliage almost to the ground. In a few short weeks they'll be growing like mad

Lupines. If they have finished flowering, cutting the spent stalks down to near ground level may encourage another flush of flowers.

Delphiniums. If there are new buds growing on the stem, only cut back as far as the new shoot. Deadhead spent flower stems.

Alchemilla. (Lady's Mantle). If the plant has stopped flowering and the foliage looks past its best, cut them right to the base and water thoroughly. New leaves will grow.

Coreopsis. When the plants fade, in mid to late summer, cut back by a third to a half to encourage new growth and fresh flowers.

Salvia. Plants can get leggy and overgrown. Cut back to a growth point that has a new side bud forming to encourage new flowers.

Phlox. Cut back in early August to encourage a fresh flush of flowers. (Alas, sometimes the deer will do it for you!)

Campanula. Bellflower will give you a late season new bloom. Cut it back by half. Simply grab handfuls of the plant and trim with hand pruners.

Dividing / Transplanting High Summer to Fall

September is the perfect time to start dividing perennials. Hopefully the heat is coming down, the dew stays late in the morning, the rains are a little more dependable and (because the ground will stay warm for a long time to come) there is plenty of time for newly dug and planted plants to adjust to their new homes. Plan on giving newly divided plants about 6 weeks to acclimate before the first hard freeze. In general, spring-blooming plants are best divided or transplanted in the fall.

Why divide a plant? Divide because flowering is diminishing and dividing will rejuvenate it or to check its spread into new areas and keep it under control. Many gardeners simply like to propagate a plant they grow successfully and which suits their garden landscape.

Try to pick a cloudy day on which to divide. As you dig your perennials, place them on plastic or in a flat cardboard box and cover them lightly with newspaper. Renew the soil with generous amounts of compost.

If you are dividing, discard dead centers and replant only healthy pieces (usually the outside pieces.) Give your new plants a large hole so that you can spread out the roots of the new plant. Firm the soil around the new division and water well. Keep your eyes on the new plants for several weeks to make sure that they are settling in and water as needed.

Perennials to divide in the fall include astilbe, campanula, bleeding heart, all irises, ajuga, nepeta, phlox, daylilies, hosta and old-fashioned bleeding heart.

Some plants should never be divided. They include alyssum, candytuft, foxgloves, lavenders, and perovskia.

Harvesting and Storing Vegetables

Most vegetables are at their peak of tenderness and flavor when they are on the small size. It may be fun to grow the world's biggest zucchini but eating it is another matter! Try to harvest almost every day as picking season comes ... picking every day encourages the plant to produce more. Being out in the vegetable garden daily lets you spot signs of trouble with the plant and deal with problems in a timely manner. It helps to keep cultivar information handy so that you have a rough idea of when your vegetables will be ready for harvesting.

Acer Gardens Information Sheet on **Harvesting and Storing Vegetables** is available on the web site and will give you a valuable timetable for harvesting your produce.

Two Cool-Weather Vegetable Crops to Count On

Although you are probably still harvesting a good crop of vegetables, it won't be too long before the weather starts to change around the edges and it's time to think ahead to some popular cool-weather crops. Two of the most popular are easily grown here in Connecticut: spinach and lettuce.

Lettuce

Lettuce loves cool weather and fall crops should be planted in late summer so that they will reach maturity when the fall air is cool. Lettuce grows best in loose, cool soil with good drainage but in full sun. Water lightly but frequently, just enough to keep the soil moist. Harvesting is dependent on the type of lettuce you are growing.

Leaf lettuce can be harvested, leaf by leaf, as needed. The method is actually called cut-and-come-again because the plant will keep growing. Crisp lettuce is harvested by the complete head and you cut that off at the base. Either way, whether you are harvesting a single leaf or an entire head, do so early in the morning when the leaves are crisp and fresh. Temperatures above 80°F can cause lettuce to bolt so plan accordingly.

Spinach

There are so many varieties of spinach and so many different types of leaves ranging from flat and smooth to crinkled and textured! A fall crop is best started 6-8 weeks before the average first frost date. If the soil is too warm using a shade cloth will help keep the soil around the plants cool. Grow spinach in full sun, mixing in compost at planting time. Fall spinach has a long harvest window; you can actually extend that window by using plastic covers as the season advances.

Both baby and mature spinach leaves can be harvested. Take the leaves from the outside and leave the inner leaves to continue growing. After harvesting, wash and spin dry the leaves and store in the refrigerator in a plastic bag or container. Spinach will keep fresh about a week.

Preparing for a Storm.

As unpleasant as it is to contemplate, we do get storms from time to time: thunderstorms sweep in with heat waves and hurricanes, or their aftermath, come up the coast. The prudent gardener pays attention to weather reports and takes notice of the state of the garden before a storm arrives.

Prune out dead branches on trees or shrubs.

Make sure that pergolas, arches and trellises are firm on their foundations.

If a storm is due to hit and you have a staked sapling, untie the tree from the stake so that it can move with the wind. Re-tie it when the storm has passed.

Gather gardening tools and equipment, hanging plants, small water baths and small containers and park them in the garage.

Remove small, decorative garden objects, including wind chimes, which could become air-borne and put them in a safe place.

Move light furniture and tables into the garage until the storm has passed. Store the garden furniture pillows inside.

Finally, after the storm has passed, get out the hose and water off your plants, bushes and small trees. You don't want leftover salt water sitting on your foliage.

Bulbs

Sliding into late summer means it's time to plan for bulbs! Adding small, unusual bulbs to your established gardens is a quick way to enhance your spring plantings and a fun way to experiment with "new looks". You can "tuck in" little bulbs almost anywhere in the garden as long as the soil drains well. Don't just scatter your bulbs around the garden ...plant bulbs thickly to give an abundant look ... inter-planting them among established perennials allows your perennials to disguise the dying foliage of the bulbs after they bloom.

Location counts ... bulbs need sun even after they have bloomed in order to develop next year's flowers. After you plant, fertilize and then water the bulbs. It's a good idea to mark the location with a plant stake. Tuck little bulbs around steps, near doors, any place where you will see them as you come and go. Winters are long in Connecticut and bulbs brighten the early spring landscape. Find room for some of these ... remember, you'll be so happy to see them in the Spring!

We are all trying to encourage pollinators, especially bees, to help our gardening efforts. The earliest bees to arrive need the nectar and pollen from early bulbs ... it's their first fresh food after the winter and will help feed them before the first wildflowers and spring perennials bloom. Some bees have been known to sleep inside a crocus as it closes for the night! Bees are most attracted to bulb flowers that are blue, purple, white and yellow.

In this climate, bulb planting should be an on-going process as the nights begin to cool down in late September. Start with the smallest bulbs (and remember...some of those don't really have a sharp-end-up so just lay them on their sides in the ground. They'll actually right themselves and grow properly towards the light when the time comes!) As fall continues, start planting the larger bulbs and finish with the Tulips in early to mid November. Some gardeners put a thin layer of fine gravel in with the bulbs to deter the voles.

Many bulbs will be available at the nursery from late August on. Daffodils, paper whites for forcing and large-sized amaryllis bulbs, some pre-potted, will be available a little later in September. Acer Gardens will also be carrying tulips as well as several varieties of garlic. A complete list of what's available when will be sent out later this season as an email.

Acer Gardens
Linda Z. Lynch
Editor & Writer