

HOME & GARDEN

Add fall color; plant spring bulbs and winter veggies

The calendar says its autumn and so we must be in our Indian summer. Trees are starting to put on their colorful fall show for us, and we know there are things that we need to do to get the gardens ready for winter and spring.

Now is the time to get a start on next year's spring garden. So here are a few tasks that can be started. While the soil is still warm, you should think about planting some perennials because their roots will become more established when spring does arrive.

Tulips, daffodils, iris and crocus bulbs should be put in the ground now for that burst of spring color. Tulips can still be planted up to early November. When planting these bulbs, except the tulips, plant them two to three times deeper than the diameter of the largest bulb.

The tulips should be planted three times as deep as they are wide. Also, the larger the bulb, the larger your flower will be. For continuous spring blooms, look for a variety of tulips that are marked for early-, mid- and late-blooming. For you first-time gardeners, bulbs do not like wet feet, so don't plant them where you know



Betty Victor
The dirt from the garden

there will be standing water, and plant point up. Be sure that you always plant healthy, disease-free bulbs for the best flowers. Autumn is the time to add chrysanthemums; these plants are native to China, where they have grown them for more than 2,500 years. They are considered a "noble plant" in China. There are more than 100 different "mums" to choose from, so it can be a challenge to choose what color, size that will work in your garden.

They will grow well in containers; put them near your front door for a cheery greeting. Mums require full sun and well-drained soil to keep them looking their best. How they are watered is also important. Too much will cause the leaves to turn yellow and fall off; too little causes woody stems and loss of lower leaves. Four weeks after planting, you should fertilize them with an all-purpose fertilizer, then again later in the fall.

Asters in purple or blue are another colorful addition to a fall garden. Asters are plants that are not fussy about the soil you plant them in, but they do like full sun. Aphids and spider mites could show up on this plant; if they do, use an insecticidal soap on them.

Spring will also bring out slugs; they are sure that the asters were planted just for them. If you do not know how to get rid of them, you can call the Master Gardeners' hotline at 784-1322 or e-mail mgsolano@ucdavis.edu to learn a safe way to rid your garden of them.

Try pansies for winter and spring blooms. Their sweet fragrance is welcome on those cold, dreary winter days. Pansies seldom have pest or disease problems on their cheerful-looking faces, but if they do appear, use an organic fungicide, reading the label carefully on how to use it. Full sun is required for them as well; they are not too fussy about the soil that they grow in and do well in almost any type. An all-purpose, time-released fertilizer will keep them at their best.

Trees and shrubs should be planted now, so that they

Now is also a good time to plant ornamental grasses. Their blooms will be at their best now, so you can pick the one that works for you.

have a start for a good root system before they go dormant. Now is also a good time to plant ornamental grasses. Their blooms will be at their best now, so you can pick the one that works for you. Ornamental grasses add a lot of movement to a fall and winter garden.

Remember our native plants; we have more than 4,300 of them. For the type and best pick, try to find a nursery that sells them. Most native plants societies have plant sales this time of year, so watch the newspaper for information on when and where they might be held.

Native plants once established are fairly drought-tolerant and pest-free and grow with little attention.

Our California lilac --- Ceanothus -- has 43 different species. Their size ranges from low-mounding to almost tree size. Wild-flower seed should be sown now for spring blooms.

These are just a few of the many native plants we have that you might want to try in your garden: heuchera, penstemon, salvia, California fuchsia, Coffeeberry and of course, California poppy. Do not pick any of the native plants from the wild; you could face a fine if you do. It's better to find a nursery that can help you find the native you might want. When these plants bloom, you should see more butterflies, bees and birds in your garden.

Keeping your garden clean continues to be important during this time, so weeds do not have a chance to re-seed. Remove any annuals you know are not going to last into the winter months. If you grow camelias and have early-blooming ones, be sure to remove any dead blossoms to prevent blossom blight.

Wait until March to prune fuchsia, hibiscus, or any frost-sensitive plants. Cut back on fertilizer for winter; most plants will be

in their dormant stage and will not need it. Protect plant roots from frost by putting down a layer of mulch. Mulch will also give their root system something to eat during winter, along with protection.

Don't forget to water your yard if rains have not started. Keep your lawn mowed no shorter than 1 1/2 inches and clean of leaves to help with pest and disease control through the winter months.

Broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts should be planted now for your winter vegetable garden.

These are just a few things that can be done to have the gardens looking their best until spring. Remember that winter is when the spring and summer catalogs start coming to us. This makes us start to think of spring and summer planting and what new and colorful plants we might add to our gardens.

Betty Victor is a Master Gardener with the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Fairfield. If you have gardening questions, you can call the Master Gardeners office at 784-1322.

Blue fescue proves popular as ornamental grass

The trouble with tribbles is that they were born pregnant. At least that's what Dr. McCoy realized on what may be the most famous of all Star Trek episodes.

Those furry little creatures reproduced so quickly they threatened to take over the Enterprise. Many ornamental grasses can just as quickly infest a yard with unwanted seedlings. Others invade with their sheer size, growing massive, such as the Victorian favorite, Pampas grass. Fountain grasses, maiden grass and a host of others are simply too large to grow in smaller yards. If you're in love with their natural looks, but short on garden space, or live in sandy soils where every seed grows, there is one tribble-like grass that fits perfectly into the urban condition.

It is blue fescue, a beautiful dome of turquoise foliage about the size of a tribble that hails originally from the south of France. It is a small tuft of leaves just 6 to 10 inches tall and wide that remains evergreen in mild climates such as California. Like all of the fescue clan, it bears narrow, almost needle-like leaves, which is part of its visual appeal. The blades are quite stiff, radiating out from the center of the plant to create a perfect icy blue half dome. It is this precise form that drew the eye of landscapers 50 years before any other ornamental grass was popular.

It first came on the scene during the post war building boom of the 1950s when designers were looking for graphic plants to pair with modern architecture in the rapidly growing cities of the western states. What appealed to them the most was fescue's reliably uniform size, which means 10 blue fescues of the same age will grow into matching domes of foliage. This uniformity allowed them to be set out in geometric patterns, equally spaced in a grid that resulted in spare but dramatic fields. Uniformity also means they can be aligned to create linear elements in



Scripps Howard Service photos

Elijah blue: Sapphire leaved *Festuca glauca* Elijah Blue is the most well proven "tribble" grass cultivars.

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Jewel garden pots: The smallest forms of blue fescue are fabulous for creating textural variations in pots of perennials and succulents.

the landscape like a sapphire blue ink pen on the land.

Since the mid-century discovery of tribble grass, breeders have worked to develop more varieties of fescue with varying characteristics. Some bear stronger color while others feature larger or smaller sized foliage domes. Still more were developed for colder winters or wet ground, which

extends the usability of tribble grass outside its original range.

Another breeding tack sought to undo the uniformity by creating a larger more relaxed plant that fit better into naturalistic plantings. The blue foliage could be integrated into colored flagstone. It makes a beautiful nesting plant for boulders and spotting into dry stream beds. The color and texture become powerful elements to either blend into the landscape or stand out in high contrast.

Blue fescue blooms with thin spikes that stand over its crown in the late summer. They can completely change the character of the plants from crisp domes to shaggy heads. For this reason it's not uncommon for gardeners with modern geometric plantings to clip their fescues periodically to remove the emerging spikes and sculpt a more perfect dome.

Maureen Gilmer is a horticulturist and former host of "Weekend Gardening" on DIY Network. Read her blog at www.MoPlants.com/blog. E-mail her at mogilmer@yahoo.com.

Fear: Historic Lawler House in Suisun City turns into haunted house

From Page D1

his right cheek became pronounced.

On his left cheek, the skin appeared to have been pulled away. And there were visible wounds on his forehead.

Robinson said his face felt really tight and he had a hard time talking. However, before he removed it, he was going to make the trek next door, look into his mother's work window and give her a good scare.

The makeup class was a real learning experience, he said. "You think film or stage and you forget live action. This is really cool. I'm excited to be part of this."

Guptill told the class that horror movie makeup changed in the 1980s after people who had served as medics and field soldiers in Vietnam came back and shared what they had seen.

The eyebrows tell all

Conner Watson got a



Brad Zweerink/Daily Republic

Solano Community College theater students will use a variety of accessories for the parts they play in the Haunted House.

brief dusting of blue face paint and some fake blue eyelashes, on one eye only. But it was his arched eyebrows, designed by Bandy, that intrigued his fellow students -- in part, because Bandy shared how expressive eyebrows are.

"If you have a high arch

in the center (like she did to Watson), that's an evil look," she said. She pointed to one of the women in the class and remarked she had eyebrows that were like those of Brooke Shields, reflecting an ingenue character.

"Eyebrows say a lot about people," Bandy said.

Guptill told his students that stage makeup is a "huge field for creativity, only limited by imagination and the mastery of the tools."

As for choosing makeup, Bandy told the group she reads the scripts and does a lot of research, especially in regards to the character's health and age. "There are a lot of dead people in your case," she jokingly told them.

"You have to look at makeup and hair," she said. "You can't have one without the other."

She suggested the students look for icons of the era they are working in and used the example of SCT's current production of "Assassins," citing the fact the man playing John Wilkes Booth bears little resemblance to the man who shot President Abraham Lincoln.

However, thanks to makeup and hair, he is believable in the role.

"Pick the biggest thing (about the character). It's usually the first thing people

At a glance

SCT's Halloween Spooktacular

5-10 p.m. Thursday and Friday

Lawler House, 714 Main St., Suisun City

\$2 in costume, \$5 not in costume

From 5 to 6:30 p.m., the haunted house will be rated G and appropriate for younger children.

From 7 to 10 p.m., the haunted house will become PG-13 and not suitable for the faint of heart.

<http://www.solanocollegetheatre.org>

will recognize. And, it's usually the first thing people see," Bandy said.

Guptill encouraged them to check out Boris Karloff as the mummy.

"The makeup is completely built around the eyes and the face and it has a

grainy texture," he said.

Another example is how Bela Lugosi was made up as Dracula in the 1930s vs. how Christopher Lee was in later decades.

"Bela came from the stage," Guptill said. "His makeup was much broader."

"This is my favorite class to teach," Bandy said. "When I work with the students on corrective makeup and then tell them were are going to do blood and guts, they think that's gross. But they love it."

But becoming a creature takes time and work, she added.

"It all depends on the intricacy. With a movie like 'Planet of the Apes,' it can take six hours to do makeup from start to finish.

"But it's worth every second. What it does for the actor is priceless," Bandy said.

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