

Horticulture

# Perennials with colorful foliage

## Watering newly planted shade trees

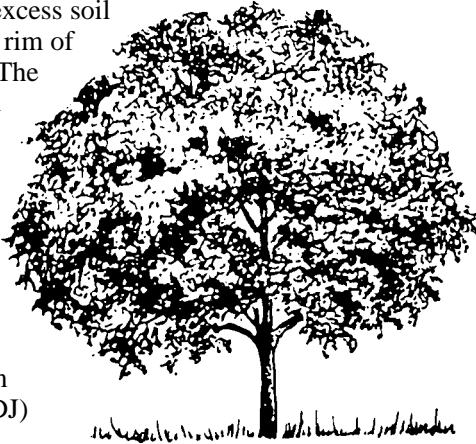
Newly planted shade trees need a lot of "TLC" to become successfully established. Because of Nebraska's climate extremes, supplemental water may be the most critical factor in establishing shade trees.

The frequency and amount of water depends on the type of soil and weather conditions. For example, sandy soils lose water faster than heavier clay soils and should be watered more frequently. Also, trees should be watered more often during drought periods.

As good rule of thumb, newly planted trees should receive one good soaking per week. Soak the soil to a depth of at least two feet. This would require an application of approximately 50 gallons of water. One deep soaking weekly is better than daily light waterings.

Don't rely on the lawn sprinkler to water newly planted trees along with the grass. Watering with a lawn sprinkler usually doesn't penetrate deep enough for tree roots to use much of it. The same principle applies to natural rain: do not rely on natural precipitation unless the amount and frequency is adequate.

A saucer shaped basin constructed around the base of the tree will aid in watering. The basin should be about two inches deep and 3-4 ft. in diameter. Place excess soil and sod pieces around the rim of the basin to form a ridge. The basin will hold water until it can soak away. The basin area can be mulched with 3-4 in. of good mulch material (wood chips, sawdust, grass clippings, etc.) to conserve moisture, prevent weed competition and insulate the roots from heat and cold extremes. (DJ)



## Lilacs in the landscape

Lilacs are among the most popular of the deciduous flowering shrubs. They are highly valued for their appearance and fragrant flowers.

Because of their vigorous habit of growth, lilacs are ideal for hedges, borders, and in mass plantings for their tremendous display of flowers. Few shrubs can rival lilacs for bloom even under adverse city conditions. They are useful as accent or specimen plants at the corners or along houses and buildings. Another desirable landscape feature is their ability to improve year after year if attention to their specific pruning and pest problems are met. Older lilacs display a unique and attractive branching pattern in the winter when the branches are bare. Lilacs are quite hardy in cold climates, but require full sun to flower well.

Pruning and spraying to control pest problems are essential for best growth and flowers. The lilac borer can be destructive if not controlled. Oyster shell scale can be a serious problem with all lilacs. The best time to spray is when the scale crawlers appear which is about mid to late May. In late summer the leaves may become covered with powdery mildew especially after rainy spells. This does little harm to the plant.

The best time to prune a lilac is right after it flowers. Pruning consists of removing old flower clusters and thinning out the oldest branches at ground level to encourage new growth from the base of the plant. Outward spread of lilac shrubs can be controlled by the removal of suckers. The strongest new shoots should be left to take the place of the older stems which will eventually be cut out.

Occasionally, it is necessary to renew an older overgrown lilac. Cutting the whole plant down to within ten inches of the ground is a drastic means of rejuvenation. However, the plant will survive. The best way to treat old plants is prune out of the older stems each year for three consecutive years. In this way the plant can maintain a reasonable height in the landscape and still flower from the remaining wood. By the time the last pruning is completed, replacement wood should be strong enough to support the plant and promote flowering. (MJM)



Most perennials are grown for their attractive flowers. They bloom for a few days or weeks, but are green, unassuming plants during the rest of the growing season. There are, however, some perennials that have colorful foliage. These perennials add color to the garden from spring to fall. Following is a partial list of perennials that have attractive foliage.

Hostas are a favorite foliage perennial. There are hundreds of hosta varieties. The varieties differ in leaf color, leaf shape, plant size, and flower color. The foliage may be green, blue, gold or variegated. The leaves may be long and narrow, nearly round or heart-shaped. Hosta varieties vary in height from 2-3 in. to 3-4 ft. Flowers may be white, blue or purple. Some varieties have fragrant flowers.

Lungworts or pulmonarias are clump-forming perennials that possess distinctive white or silver spots on their foliage. Lungworts do best in partial to heavy shade.

Sedums are fleshy-leaved perennials that are grown mainly

for their late summer bloom. However, several varieties have colorful foliage. Sedums are easy to grow, tolerate dry conditions, and have few pests. They perform best in full sun and well-drained soils.

A perennial with burgundy foliage is *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red.' 'Husker Red' grows 2 1/2 to 3 ft. tall. It blooms in early summer. The flowers are white with a pink tinge. The foliage is burgundy or maroon-red. It does best in well-drained soils and full sun. As you might guess, 'Husker Red' was introduced by the University of Nebraska. It was selected as the 1996 Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association.

Coral bells have been grown for many years for their showy flowers. In recent years, their

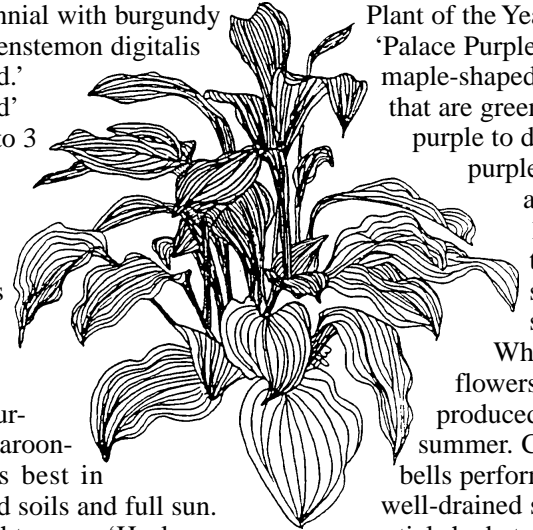
popularity has soared due to the introduction of several new varieties with attractive foliage. One of the most popular varieties is *Heuchera micrantha* 'Palace Purple.' In fact, it was selected as the 1991 Perennial Plant of the Year.

'Palace Purple' has maple-shaped leaves that are greenish-purple to dark purple. Plants are 15 to 18 inches tall with a similar spread.

White flowers are produced in summer. Coral bells perform best in well-drained soils and partial shade to full sun.

Other perennials with colorful foliage include snow-on-the-mountain, ajuga, lamb's-ears, sage, houttuynia and artemisia.

Consider planting perennials with colorful foliage in your garden this year. (MJM)



## 1998 May/June Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Check pines for sawfly	2
3	4 Apply fungicide to pines for tip blight	5 Control euonymus scale	6 Apply preventative fungicide to bluegrass	7	8	9
10 Average date of last frost	11 Control billbugs in bluegrass	12 Put out rain gauge	13 Apply fungicide to pines for needle blight	14 Plant wildflower seeds	15	16 Plant buffalograss
17	18	19	20 Plant gladiolus bulbs	21 Fertilize zoysiagrass	22 Plant cannas	23
24	25	26	27 Plant warm season transplants	28	29	30
31	1	2 Power rake zoysiagrass	3	4	5	6
7	8 Plug zoysiagrass	9	10 Watch for cabbage worms	11	12	13
14	15 Control apple maggot	16	17 Apply fungicide to pines for needle blight	18 Prune spring flowering shrubs	19	20 Check bluegrass for sod web worm
21	22 Control bagworms	23 Fertilize buffalograss	24 Watch for bean leaf beetle	25 Check roses for black spot	26 Take softwood cuttings to start plants	27
28	29 Watch for squash vine borer	30				

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJM)

## Repotting houseplants

Spring is an excellent time to repot houseplants. Repotting gives the roots new soil and more room in which to grow.

Generally, transplant to a pot one size larger than the one it is now in. Frequency of repotting depends upon a plant's growth rate. Slow-growing plants may require repotting every two to three years, while fast growers must be repotted annually.

Several hours before a plant is to be repotted, water it thoroughly. Then turn the plant and pot upside down, gently tapping the sides and edges of

the container to remove it. If the roots are heavily matted or woven together, loosen the ball to remove about half of the soil. This will encourage new roots to grow away from the tight circular pattern after repotting.

Place the plant in the new pot, holding it at the depth at which it originally grew and add potting mixture. Gently pack the soil around the roots to eliminate air pockets. Leave at least 1/2 inch at the top of the pot free of soil to aid in watering. After repotting, water thoroughly and then not again until the surface

becomes slightly dry.

Soil for houseplants must be well drained. Also, a soil's physical makeup is very important. If only soil is used, it will pack after several waterings.

Best mixture is one that contains adequate organic matter and coarse soil particles. This ensures drainage and air needed for good root formation and growth. Most houseplants will thrive in a soil mixture containing five parts (by volume) of good garden loam soil, four parts peat moss or compost and one part sharp builder's sand. (DJ)