Stunning Fall Flowers

Fall is here. What a wonderful time!

Chrysanthemums get a lot of attention in fall and that attention is well deserved, but there are other perennials for us in North Dakota that are equally stunning.

Start with New England aster. Its pink and purple flowers are irresistible to us, bees and butterflies (Fig. 1). Asters are easy to grow and prolific bloomers. They have tall stems that make for striking bouquets. ‘Purple Dome’ is a big seller.

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia) is one of my favorites. Its mounded plants are adorned with golden daisies. The chocolate brown seedheads persist through winter, attracting birds. ‘Goldsturm’ (Fig. 2) is a classic cultivar; a true Hall of Fame perennial.

Russian sage (Perovskia) tolerates drought and grows well here. It features silvery foliage and tall, airy spikes of blue flowers. ‘Denim ‘n Lace’ is popular for its short and sturdy stems (Fig. 3).

Stonecrop (Sedum) is one of the finest perennials for dry sites. Look for varieties with eye-catching foliage in summer as well as radiant flowers in fall. ‘Autumn Joy’ (Fig. 4) has been a standout for decades and the new Sunsparklers® are outstanding groundcovers.

The flowers of Japanese anemone are lovely as they sway in the breeze. ‘Honorine Jobert’ has pure white blooms (Fig. 5). It grows especially well as a border in partial shade.

One of the most interesting fall bloomers is black snakeroot (Actaea). A favorite in shade gardens, the coppery-purple plants send out flower spikes that look like fuzzy white snakes (Fig. 6). Fascinating!

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Plant Health Care

Fruits and Vegetables

Ripen Tomatoes Indoors
Place your blushing, crack-free fruits on a newspaper and then place another newspaper sheet over them. This traps ethylene, which fruits emit when ripening. Keep out of direct sun. Room temperatures develop fullest flavors.

Harvest Tomatoes Indoors

Frosty Apples
Apples on trees can tolerate temps approaching 25°F before frost damage occurs. If they freeze, wait to thaw before picking. Use promptly.

Bird Damage to Apples
Thirsty birds can peck on fruits. Diseases may enter these wounds. Harvest and discard wounded fruits.

Harvest Pumpkins
Light frosts will not harm the fruit, but harvest before a killing frost (28°F). Leave a few inches of stem attached. Do not bruise. Cure in a warm (80°F) spot for 10 days for long-term storage.

Harvest Popcorn
Wait until kernels are hard and husks are dry. Remove husks and store cobs in mesh bags. Keep in a dry, warm and airy place. After a few weeks, pop a sample. If satisfactory, seal kernels in airtight jars.

Trees and Shrubs

Herbicide Injury
Sprays on lawns this fall to control weeds have led to another wave of trees exposed to herbicide drift. Leaves become stretched or cupped. Trees typically survive drift.

Hackberry Nipple Gall
Gnat-like psyllids lay eggs in leaves, stimulating the development of chambers where nymphs develop. Tree is not harmed. When nymphs emerge in fall, they may be a nuisance until frost.

Buckeyes
Nuts of Ohio buckeye are dropping. These nuts have the gleam of a deer buck’s eye, hence their name. They are toxic to humans although squirrels seem to like them.
Plant Health Care

Flowers

Big, Bold Tulips
Darwin hybrids boast the biggest blooms on the sturdiest stems. With proper care, they’ll bloom for many years; longer than any other standard tulip. Select big bulbs; at least 11/12 cm and preferably 12+ in diameter. Plant early in fall to establish strong roots. Sprinkle 1 cup of 10–10–10 time-release or a similar bulb fertilizer per 30 sq. ft. over bed. Rake and water deeply.

Birdsnest Fungus
This fungus decomposes organic matter in soil and wood mulch. The “nest” collects water and the “eggs” splash out, later releasing spores. It is harmless but can be destroyed by raking.

Measles on Peony
Avoid overhead sprinkling. Remove all foliage this fall. Mancozeb or other fungicide may be sprayed when plants are 4–6 inches tall next spring. Consider transplanting/dividing next year if plants are crowded or growing in shade.

Lawns

Kill Perennial Weeds
The best time to kill dandelion, thistle and other perennial weeds is in mid to late September. The weeds will channel the herbicide down into their roots as they prepare for winter.

Seeding
Sowing now is risky, especially in north. Mid-September is the recommended deadline. Keep soil moist to promote quick establishment. An option is to sow in November; this seed sprouts in spring.

Nuisance Insects

Boxelder Bugs
Bugs will congregate on sunny walls to stay warm. Seal crevices along doors and windows. Spray with 5 TBSP of detergent per gallon water. Continue spraying as bugs appear.

Crickets
Seal windows, doors and the foundation. Reduce outdoor lighting. Remove debris near foundation. Insecticides may be sprayed near entries. Crickets die from frost. They will starve if they get indoors.

Hornets
Kill hornets if the nest is in a hazardous place. Apply a knock-down spray in the hole of the nest. Spray at night; a cool night in the 50s is best. Otherwise, the hornets will die after a hard frost.
### Weather Almanac for September 16–22, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>AVG FROST&lt;sup&gt;1,2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>TEMPERATURE&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Sep 16–22</th>
<th>RAINFALL&lt;sup&gt;3,4&lt;/sup&gt; Sep 16–22 2018</th>
<th>GROWING DEGREE DAYS&lt;sup&gt;3,5&lt;/sup&gt; Sep 16–22 2018</th>
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#### DAYLENGTH (Sep 24, McClusky, center of ND)<sup>3</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunrise: 7:31 AM Daylength: 12h 7m</th>
<th>Sunse: 7:37 PM Change since Sep 17: –23m</th>
<th>LONG-TERM OUTLOOKS&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</table>

1,2,3 Sources: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, www.sunrisesunset.com, respectively.
4 Measurements begin April 1.
5 GDDs for garden vegetables are not available. GDD data in this table are for corn, which responds to temperature as most vegetables grown in gardens. Data begin May 1 with base minimum and maximum temperatures of 50 and 86°F, respectively.
6 Frost data for Beulah and Campbell, respectively.
7 Frost data for Beulah and Campbell, respectively.

### Credits


Written by Tom Kalb, who expresses gratitude to the NDSU educators who contributed to this report: Sheldon Gerhardt, Carrie Knutson, Marissa Leier, Megan Vig, Yolanda Schmidt; Rachel Wald and Joe Zeleznik.

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