



Your Gorgeous Foliage Garden

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Published in 2022.

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First edition. March 29, 2022.

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This entertaining gardening ebook describes some ideal selections of variegated and colorful leafy plants you can grow and admire in your flower garden, landscape, or containers. Many of these plants provide great color, not only in delightful flowers but also in their leaves.

This guide is not the definitive listing of plants having variegated and colorful foliage plants. Please consider it a primer in understanding and encouraging the use of these plants in a garden setting.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies about their growing conditions and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, the best growth conditions, and my recommended varieties to find and grow. Please be aware these plants may not be available, discontinued, or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The following plants use their Latin name first, then a common name or names.

The digital photos are of the flowers at my home, garden centers, public gardens, and Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction



Why should flowers have all the attention and prestige in a garden? Why not colorful leaves? You can add several attractive bedding and border leafy plants to any garden.

This ebook presents popular and rare selections of garden or landscape plants having pleasantly gaudy foliage. Some display white or yellow variegations on leaf edges, bold splotches within each leaf, or vivid contrasting vein coloration.

Other plants have multicolored geometric designs and specific red, purple, black, yellow, and silvery-white foliage.

Variegated plants have always been beloved for growing in flower gardens. They have incredible beauty — especially valuable when the

flowers are not blooming. Several varieties are available to gardeners in garden centers and smaller nurseries. Others are rare and found online.

Wish your flower garden to become incredibly gorgeous and your neighbors envious? Then learn which types of foliage plants you can grow using this publication as your guide. Their attractively vibrant foliage creates beds and borders of intense vitality and distinction.

To find the plants listed in this ebook, please visit your nearby larger garden centers or search online to find specialty nurseries that grow and sell them.

Vivacious Variegations

Growers usually describe garden plant foliage having contrasting colors as being variegated. Here, the green leaves are bicolored (sometimes tri-colored) with stripes, blotches, spots, or margined with white, yellow, or another color. It is like having a solid green shirt and then splashing or outlining it with chlorine bleach or paint.

The overall effect of growing several similar variegated plants in a garden can be striking, for they appear to brighten a more subdued or visually lethargic area.

By adding that margin or a splash of yellow or white, these plants become a standout feature, drawing your eyes to them while the regular green-leafed plants become less noticeable.

The plants described in this section display white, yellow, or another contrasting color variegation.

Asclepias – Milkweed

Asclepias curassavica



A common name for this plant is “Mexican Bloodflower.” Not all Milkweed family members are hardy perennials; some are tropical and grow as annuals. This colorful, frost-tender plant is more of a tropical species but grown anywhere.

Look for this stunning variety having variegated leaves. You can't go wrong by adding this ultra-colorful milkweed to your flower beds. Be aware if you live in North America, the Monarch butterfly caterpillars can quickly eat most or all the leaves. Cover the plants with a breathable fine mesh horticultural material to prevent this. Yes, it looks tacky but plants lacking leaves look worse.

Found growing worldwide, most milkweed species thrive in full or partial sunlight and in well-drained, fertile soil. You can raise most milkweed species from seeds, but you can only propagate this variegated variety by cuttings.

Finding this plant in garden centers may prove difficult, but some online nurseries should have it available.

Buddleia – Butterfly Bush

Buddleia davidii “Butterfly Gold”



This striking variegated variety helps to showcase the attractive blue flower spikes guaranteed to attract the butterflies. They will look more memorable if several plants combine to form a giant clump or bush.

Arranged in an elongated spike, the massive cluster of tiny florets bloom by midsummer and into fall. These flower spikes release a strong fragrance of citrus, honey, and pine.

Hardy from zones 5 to 10, these beautiful woody shrubs prefer growing in full sun and rich soil. They appear to have no insect or disease problems, but their only concern is severe cold temperatures. The top

growth will die back to the ground in cold climates after each winter but quickly re-grow from underground shoots in early summer.

Like most woody perennials, avoid over-fertilization of the soil. A lean, low nitrogen growing medium helps the stems become “woodier” to ensure better winter cold survival.

Depending on where you live and your soil fertility, this variety may extend to six feet tall and slightly less wide. If you live in colder climates, expect less size. It will command your neighbors’ admiration (along with jealousy) and the power to attract the neighborhood butterflies.

You may find it difficult to purchase this variety in garden centers, but online nurseries should have it available.

Canna

Canna pretoria “Bengal Tiger” and *Canna generalis* “Stuttgart”



If you desire to add a tropical feel to your flower gardens, you can't go wrong with including these colorful plants. It is their striking flowers and the large leaves that offer plenty of visual enjoyment.

Many varieties flaunt excessively colorful variegated leaves, which look like stained glass windows back-lit by the sun. Some gardeners will shyly confess that it is these leaves they enjoy more than the flowers. In this section are two examples of vivid white and yellow-based variegations. “**Bengal Tiger**,” also called ‘**Pretoria**’ (shown above), has

stunning orange flowers with yellow-striped (or green-striped) foliage. It can grow to 8 feet tall or more.



Another variety, “**Stuttgart**” (shown above), has a commanding display of wide-banded sections of white and emerald green leaves. Wow! It is gorgeous.

Cannas are native to tropical and subtropical regions of Central and South America. Over time, different species became “transplanted” into temperate and other tropical areas. These plants become popular for

their ease of culture and their adaptability to form hybrids and grow in any garden.

Grown from thick rhizomes, their ultimate height — based on how tall the flower stalk grows — can extend up to eight feet or more, depending on the variety.

All Cannas prefer to grow in full to partial sunlight and continuously moist, highly fertile soil — either in the garden or in containers. These plants thrive in humid conditions but will need regular watering during times of drought.

Cold region gardeners (below zone 8) have splendid success growing these plants by planting the rhizomes in larger containers and setting them outside after the last frost. By fall, bring these pots indoors for the winter. By withholding water during this time, you simulate natural dormancy for the rhizomes.

Capsicum – Pepper

Capsicum annum “Variegated Fish Pepper”



This hot pepper will not disappoint you with plenty of attractions in the garden and on your dinner table. There is no reason you cannot grow some colorful vegetable plants in your flower beds or borders. Their fruits may not be spectacular, but their variegated leaves will undoubtedly provide interesting visual contrasts and spark spirited conversation.

Growing in the Caribbean region during the 1870s, this pepper is an African-American heirloom variety with heavily striated or speckled white (sometimes with yellow) variegated leaves. Some leaves are occasionally pure green or white. If this isn't "wild," then to top off this visual splendor, the maturing fruits (peppers) are of various mixes of

solid yellows, reds, and oranges while also developing creamy blend variegations.

These peppers are super-hot and offered initially in Mid-Atlantic restaurants as a colorful, creamy Caribbean sauce for crab, oyster, and fish dishes.

As food cuisine changed, this variegated pepper nearly became lost in the early 20th century. Few people kept this unique pepper growing and neglected to save its seeds. Almost on the brink of variety extinction, a few people rediscovered it and knew it had great potential in cooking and as an ornamental gardening subject.

When raised in well-drained, fertile soil, mature plants can grow two feet tall and wide — taller in warmer climates with a longer growing season).

Finding seeds of this variety to grow in your garden may be a challenge. Your best bet is to check with businesses specializing in selling rare seeds or plants.

Heliopsis – False Sunflower

Helianthoides var. scabra “Sunburst”



If you wish to add the “WOW!” variegation factor to your flower beds and borders, you can’t go wrong by including this hardy perennial. Although it resembles a sunflower, it technically is not one but is related to the immense daisy family. Those leaves will mesmerize you, for they are white highlighted with green veins. Or is it the other way around — green leaves overlaid with white except for the veins? It doesn’t matter because their appearance is eye-catching, especially when their golden flowers are blooming. As the summer progresses, their whiteness partially degrades back to more greenness.

A few more related vegetatively grown varieties are available, but **Sunburst** is unique for all gardeners, for you can propagate it from

seed. Genetic diversity will result, but most seedlings will develop this great variegation.

Hardy to zones 4 to 9, this plant prefers to grow in mostly sunny locations and well-drained, fertile soil. The flowers bloom in early summer and extend until fall. Seed-grown plants may differ in height, but the average adult size will be, on average, two-feet-tall and wide.

You can find seeds in more extensive seed catalogs or, for the best cutting-grown variegated selections, in garden centers. If you plan to create a garden of variegated plants, this is a must-grow variety to purchase.

Heuchera – Coral Bells

Heuchera sanguinea “Snow Angel”



It's pronounced 'HOY-ker-ah'... or 'HEW-ker-ah'... or 'HOO-chair-ah'... or 'Hoo-CHEER-ah'... or 'Who-KER-ah'... oh, never mind.

Think of Heuchera varieties as being hardy Coleus plants. Their vividly colorful leaves and equally attractive clusters of small flowers on long stems provide a gorgeous addition to any perennial border. We will view more of their colorful leaves later in the other sections of this ebook, but for now, let's concentrate on one particularly stunning example of having variegated leaves.

“Snow Angel” typically has crinkled green leaves but highlights them with bright silvery white. The younger leaves will have a yellowish cast,

but older foliage has bright splotches of white. The leaves persist most of the year in most climates — even in mild winter locations. Top that quality coleus plants!

To add more flair, spikes of bell-shaped, dark-red blossoms tower over the foliage throughout the summer. If only they could jingle! While the mound of foliage remains near the ground, the stems are about two feet tall, covered with these flowers.

Like most other varieties of Heuchera, expect this variety to live several years in your garden if given fertile, well-drained soil and partly sunny locations. You can grow it in full sun or primarily shady areas, but the “middle ground” of light is the best way to get the most enjoyment out of those stunning variegated leaves. Hardiness is from zones 3 to 9.

You should locate this variety (and others mentioned later) in larger garden centers.

Hibiscus

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis “Snow Queen”



If you thought all Hibiscus shrubs claim to fame is their “tropical-looking” enormous flowers, guess again. To be honest, those beautiful blossoms are a major attraction, but this unique and scarce variety goes one step further in announcing its appeal to any garden.

Snow Queen has a stunning display of white splotches or splashes and streaked variegations in its leaves. When combined with those vivid red blossoms, the overall effect is sheer magnificence. For a little more pizzazz, these blossoms will attract your neighborhood hummingbirds if you live in such a North American neighborhood.

It's too bad the plant is frost-tender — hardy to zone 10 — but makes a great container subject, although a large pot is necessary. If you can winter-over it indoors, you can have an instant Tropicana-feel by the following summer.

Young plants grow well when planted in sunny to partly sunny areas and fertile, well-drained soil. If you are a genuinely dedicated gardener, train the main growing shoot into a standard or tree-like form. This forms a central shoot which turns into a “tree trunk” as it ages. This careful and time-consuming process will reward you with a splendid and well-branched plant to be enjoyed for several years. Remember to bring your contained tree indoors when the weather turns cool by fall.

You may encounter a problem locating potted plants of this variety from your local garden centers or nurseries. Your best method of finding it is through an internet search.

For more colorful leaf varieties of Hibiscus, look further ahead in the next section on dark red to purple-black leafed plants.

Hosta

Hosta plantaginea (along with other species and hybrids)



Here we are with the most grown shade-loving perennial for any garden. What would a flower garden be without these outstanding plants? My first guess would be a bare or weedy garden.

With hardiness (zones 3 to 9), adaptability, gorgeous flowers, and beautiful leaves, this perennial is number one for low-maintenance shade garden enjoyment.

Today, there is a gazillion (well, close to it) Hosta species and their varieties for any shade garden. The trouble is, which plants will you grow? A trip to your nearest garden center will provide you with a

confusing assortment to ponder. Several types have various degrees of white or yellow variegation. Don't be surprised if you encounter some with almost no to little green in their leaves. How they manage to grow is a wonder.

Hostas prefer to grow in partial sunlight and shade in well-drained, fertile, but moist soil will make them look fabulous. Try to avoid planting variegated varieties in full sunlight. Always make sure the ground never collects pools of water, which causes the roots to rot.

The height of Hosta plants varies, but their flower stalks can top to over three feet tall or more — especially for the larger cultivars.

Practically all nurseries and garden centers will offer several types of Hosta plants. Don't neglect mail-order, online nurseries, for they always have rare and delectable offerings to brighten your shady acres.

Hypoestes – Polka Dot Plant

Hypoestes phyllostachya “Pink or White Splash”



I think of Hypoestes as disco Coleus plants – colorful leaves but highlighted with contrasting spots, like light reflected from a disco ball.

Native to Madagascar, these plants are strictly tropical and treated as an annual for bedding or containers. You can grow them as houseplants but need bright indirect light to display their colors better. For an outdoor display, they also need bright indirect light but will occasionally appreciate dappled sunlight. They dislike full sunlight and will show it by developing brown leaves. If grown in whole shaded areas, the leaves are greener with fewer spots.

Breeders and growers have developed several hybrid varieties. The **Splash and Confetti Series** of small-growing plants has a green base color but is highlighted with various sized spots, smudges, smears, and streaks colored of vivid rose, red, pink, lavender-blue, and, for brightness, pure white. For some varieties, it is difficult to determine if the leaves are splattered green instead of those colors!

These plants will grow over a foot tall and wide. You can create stunning displays in beds and containers by planting different colorful plants together or adding Coleus and smaller growing variegated Hostas. Many gardeners pinch off the spikes of tiny blue flowers for they are “uninteresting” (sad, but true) and distract attention away from the colorful leaves.

Raise these plants in well-drained, fertile, and moist soil. They dislike cool weather and cold ground. Don't be in a hurry to plant them in your garden or containers until late spring or early summer.

You may have seen these offered in nurseries and garden centers but passed them by (like I did many times.) Next spring, purchase them and turn part of your shady garden into a discotheque.

Ilex – Variegated English Holly

Ilex aquifolium “Argentea Marginata”



If you want to enjoy Christmas all year round, you can't go wrong with planting this outstanding landscape shrub. A cream to pure white margin highlights the pointed, indented shape of the dark green leaves. The red berries add to the pleasurable effect, especially in wintertime.

Please note this variegated shrub is female, but planting a couple of male plants (of any other English variety) in an out-of-the-way nearby spot will ensure the production of these brilliantly red berries.

This English variegated form is hardy to zone 6 (possibly 5 in some locations) but can suffer in frigid weather unless protected by a sheltered spot or grown in a southern exposure. Slower growing than

the regular Holly bushes, it can grow very tall over the years unless trimmed occasionally to form a more rounded appearance.

Grow all Holly plants in plenty of sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil.

This unique variety may pose a challenge to find in garden centers. Contact your local nurseries and ask about its availability.

Impatiens

Impatiens walleriana and *Impatiens hawkeri* hybrids



It would not be a flower garden without having a representative Impatiens variety highlighting some unique characteristics. I believe our common Impatiens plants (*Impatiens walleriana*) have one variegated variety — named, without the fanfare of exciting descriptive wording, *Impatiens walleriana* 'Variegata.' That's it. Well, never mind the Latin name, but its appearance is what matters. Its leaves are your classic variegation — a green or grayish-green interior surrounded by a white or pale-yellow band.

For extra pizzazz, numerous rose-pink flowers cover it throughout the summer. Like other Impatiens varieties, it prefers to grow in shady to partly shady locations having fertile, well-drained (but moisture enhanced) soil.

This plant is rare, so don't expect to find it at garden centers. Since sowing seeds cannot replicate the variegation, propagation is only by cuttings. Online specialty nurseries are your best resource to locate and purchase this attractive plant.

Fear not — there are other variegated Impatiens available. The **New Guinea Impatiens** (*Impatiens hawkeri*) provide beautiful color and tolerate growing in more sunlight. They can also offer more vivid colors to the flowers and some with variegated leaves. These varieties look fabulous when grown in partly shady areas. When first developed, they were pretty expensive. Today, with increased popularity, their cost has since dramatically decreased.

There are several variegated varieties available. One example is the stunning **SunPatiens® Compact Tropical Rose**, shown above. The leaves are what I call a reverse-variegation — bright yellow surrounded by a band of dark green. Sinfully delightful rose-pink flowers cover the plants for most of the summer.

You can purchase this variety in larger garden centers and online.

Ipomea – Morning-glory Vine

Ipomea nil or Ipomoea x imperialis “Cameo Elegance”



There are so many morning-glory varieties to choose from. In the 9th century, the Japanese became the first culture to cultivate Morning-glories as an ornamental garden flower. Since then, they have popularized morning glories (especially the *nil* species) to the rest of the world by creating vividly colorful and highly unusual varieties. This species is the showiest of all morning glories and is highly valued as an ornamental plant (especially a container plant) in Japan.

Growers also refer to the Japanese *nil* species as Picotee Morning-glories for having a thin white rim around the flower circumference.

They are more orderly—forming less long, invasive vines.

Some varieties have variegated felted leaves. For our purposes here, grow the **Cameo Elegance** variety, which has blotchy white variegations and vivid pink with white-rimmed blossoms. Complex genetic factors involving incorporating other morning-glory species genes produce few fertile seeds. Morning-glory genetics is a totally messed up affair, creating wildly colorful flowers.

Raise all morning-glory vines from seed and plant them in as much sunlight as possible. Train them on trellises or fences or allow them to cascade from hanging baskets to showcase all those awesome blossoms in the morning hours.

Iris – Zebra Iris or Dalmatian Iris

Iris pallida “Albovariegata” or *Iris pallida* “Argentea”



There are many Iris varieties and species available to the home gardener. For our purposes here, you will need to obtain the variegated pallida species, commonly referred to as the **Zebra or Dalmatian Iris**.

Native to Italy and Croatian locations, this species is a parent of our standard and popular tall **Bearded Iris** (*Iris germanica*). Its blade-like leaves have creamy-white to pale yellow stripes. When the violet-blue, grape-scented flowers are not blooming, the plant still draws interest due to these unique sword-like leaf blades.

Hardy to zones 3 to 9, this species grows well in full sunlight and well-drained, moist soil. Most plants will grow to over two feet tall and form clumps of plants within a few years. All Iris within these species blooms in late spring to early summer.

Many large garden centers and nurseries may have this stunning Iris available. If not, many specialty Iris nurseries (check online first) will.

Pelargonium – Zonal Geranium

Pelargonium hybridum “Wilhelm Langguth”



Our popular garden variety Pelargoniums — commonly called geraniums — have either solid green leaves or variegated, centralized, contrasting bronze bands called zonal leaves. They are bushy and have semi-succulent stems topped with pink, violet, white, salmon-orange, and the traditional favorite of red or scarlet flowers. These plants have many species with an even more significant number of hybrid variations.

Some varieties display bronze variegations to fantastic vividness. **Wilhelm Langguth** is one type having excessively white-splotched leaves. To add to its beauty are the bright red all summer blooming

blossoms. They are so unique, having to be propagated with stem cuttings.

Sadly, you can find these rare varieties only from specialty nurseries, while most garden centers grow the more standard plants with noticeable dark banding.

All geraniums prefer to grow in as much sunlight as possible and in well-drained, fertile soil. If you meet these conditions, you should have no problem growing them in a garden. Their best attraction is when growing in containers. It might be because the container soil drains excess water and dries faster than in a garden.

Being able to survive in drier soil is key to having healthy, floriferous plants. They are succulent plants — having stems that retain water even when the soil dries. This does not mean they behave like cacti, for if the ground remains too dry for too long, the plants may not recover and eventually die. If the soil remains too wet for a long time, the roots and main stem will rot. Please check the dryness of the soil every few days, especially if it has not rained for a while.

Geraniums sound like suitable candidates for a carefree garden — which they are “somewhat” — but need dead flower stems clipped off periodically to look their best.

Tropaeolum – Nasturtiums

Tropaeolum majus or *Nasturtium variegata* “Alaska”



No matter which garden plant you come across, there will eventually be a variegated one discovered. Our common annual *Nasturtium* plants are no exception. A prime example is the **Alaska Series**, available in many seed catalogs, which have a mixture of floral colors and a splash-splash of white-splotted variegated leaves. Unlike other varieties, this one holds the flowers high above the foliage.

The large blossoms are shades of red, rosy pink, yellow, orange, and white, and many have contrasting markings.

Nasturtiums may look like vines but don't have the ways and means to travel upward. They are sprawling plants but grow well in hanging baskets. Here, those long, trailing stems can cascade downward.

Avoid growing these plants in excessively fertile soil. Too much nitrogen fertilizer will make the plants produce more leaves than flowers. For hanging baskets, use regular potting soil, and some compost and gravel (for better drainage) will be adequate for better flower production.

Nasturtiums are easy to raise from seed if sown in warm soil and raised after the threat of frost. Garden centers and nurseries rarely offer these annuals since they sometimes do not transplant well when grown in pots. You should be able to find the colors you prefer from seed companies.

Kaleidoscopic Combinations

Some garden plants have gone “wild and crazy” in displaying three or more contrasting colors within their leaves. There may be some green areas, but several blended colors occupy most leaf real estate. Many flaunt themselves in excessive brilliance and vividness — and no one seems to mind. Hey, the more color, the better! Sometimes, their flowers — being pretty for sure — pale in comparison to the outstanding complex coloration of their leaves.

Growers propagate plants having this pronounced coloration to retain their unique leaf colors. Sometimes, the variegations are so deeply ingrained in the plant’s genetic structure it transmits them to future generations via their seeds. Coleus plants are an excellent example of this type of variegation-propagation.

Why would nature allow such a radical redesign of leaves from the standard green display? The most likely explanation is the genetic one. The green chlorophyll may not form correctly, and the other underlying pigments (such as carotenoid, anthocyanin, and xanthophyll) are visible. Think of it as a permanent display of fall tree foliage, but, in this case, all shades of colors are visible on a single leaf.

In this section, the vivid colors will not disappoint you. You will occasionally express a vocal “Wow!” at being amazed by all the colors.

Amaranthus

Amaranthus tricolor "Joseph's Coat"



Long before adding Coleus plants to flower gardens, Amaranth plants provided wealthy gardeners with plenty of enjoyment from their colorful leaves. One famous "fan" of these plants was Thomas Jefferson, who planted (well, let's be honest, instructed his slave workers to plant) plenty in his Monticello flower gardens.

Growers named the most famous variety after the Biblical story of Joseph's psychedelic Technicolor dream-coat of many colors. Talk about wild and crazy color patterns! If you prefer a less religious-themed nickname, it (and other similar varieties) call it the **Summer Poinsettia**.

These plants grow green until midsummer when the top portion of each plant produces leaves of eye-popping yellow, red, orange, and multi-chromatic mixed patterns. You would think its flowers would be just as colorful, but they are an eye-sore. So, if, by late summer, they develop, clip them off so more of those lovely leaves can grow.

All Amaranth plants prefer to grow in sunny and well-drained soil. Too much fertility and shady conditions will keep the plants greener and less colorful. I usually include the word 'fertile' in that sentence, but go easy on adding extra nutrient goodies to your garden soil when raising this and other similar plants.

Raising this annual plant by seed is easy, and the resultant plants look similar in color and three-foot height. They can be occasionally trimmed back to provide more side shoots. They make exceptional bedding, container subjects, and houseplants if given enough windowsill light.

Other incredibly colorful varieties are available, including some with single-color leafy tops.

You can find seed packets of this variety and others in large garden centers and seed catalogs. To be frank, I am not sure if plants are available in most nurseries; they should be for being a bedding-type plant.

Caladium – Angel Wings

Caladium bicolor



The other common names of this plant are “Heart of Jesus” and “Elephant Ears.”

Native to open areas of jungles and riverbanks of Central and South America (especially Brazil), this highly colorful leafy plant has been popular since the late 18th century. Its popularity is not for the flowers (which are rare to develop or see) but for the fantastic multi-colorful heart-shaped leaves. Combinations of colors include mottled green, red, pink, and white blotches with contrasting veins.

The size of these plants, on average, grows to two feet tall and wide. They prefer to be planted in partly shady, moist, well-drained, fertile

soils. More colorful varieties will look better when grown in morning sunlight or in sun-dappled locations.

No matter where you plant them, please make sure their bulbs (or tubers) are in moist soil—never soggy but well-drained, porous ground. They will suffer if left in dry conditions for an extended time and go prematurely dormant.

There are many varieties to choose from, and your selection should concern how much shade your garden or patio receives for the summer. Gorgeous silvery-white leaf varieties grow best in shaded areas, while vivid pinks and reds look fabulous in partly sunny/shady areas.

Larger garden centers should have a few varieties available, but your best bet is to purchase them from specialty bulb nurseries (some only specialize in growing them.) Here, they offer a vast selection of outstanding multi-colorful leaves.

For northern or colder garden locations, I must warn you not to plant these bulbs in cold or cool soil. They will never grow properly and may eventually rot. These plants need to have a head-start in warm indoor locations — preferably under a horticultural heating mat to provide bottom heat to stimulate growth. Insert a bulb in a small pot (with added moist potting mix) and allow it to grow for a few weeks before setting out the rooted (and leaf growing bulb) into its garden location.

Please wait until early summer to plant your tubers or potted plants, for they need warm soil and air temperatures to grow well.

White or silver-leaved varieties are also available and discussed later.

Canna

Canna indica 'Tropicanna' or 'Phasion'



Described earlier in the previous section with white or yellow striped variegated leaves, most plants have varied shades of solid green leaves, but '**Tropicanna** or '**Phasion**' (shown above) has unique multi-colored variegated leaves highlighted with large, orange flowers. It can exceed 8 feet tall when fully established.

Grown from thick rhizomes, their ultimate height — based on how tall the flower stalk grows — can extend up to eight feet or more, depending on the variety.

All Cannas prefer to grow in full to partial sunlight and continuously moist, highly fertile soil — either in the garden or in containers. These

plants thrive in humid conditions but will need regular watering during times of drought.

Cold region gardeners (below zone 8) have splendid success growing these plants by planting the rhizomes in larger containers and setting them outside after the last frost. By fall, bring these pots indoors for the winter. By withholding water during this time, you simulate natural dormancy for the rhizomes.

Coleus

Coleus blumei



Native to Southeast Asia, Coleus has always been popular as colorful foliage annual plants for gardens, containers, and houseplants. They resemble gorgeous stained-glass windows with vivid colors and unusual geometric patterns. Newer varieties are pleasantly gaudy with eye-popping beautiful colors. You can't resist growing a few when you see them in nurseries and garden centers.

It may be debatable, but Coleus plants are the textbook example of exhibiting the best multi-colored variegation. Years ago, most Coleus grew only from seed, but many nurseries now showcase select cultivars propagated from cuttings. Instead of having mixtures of odd multi-colored plants raised from seed, now you can have beds of the same

color — either as stained glass displays (discussed in this section) or as single vivid ‘eye opener’ shades, which are described later.

Coleus has the potential to look horrible when grown from seed. There are too many color patterns and sizes of plants. A bed or border will look like a chromatic explosion happened. Take my advice to plant cutting-grown varieties of one colorful type (or two complementary color patterns) for beds or containers. My rule is to match items—don’t mix! The appearance of a mixture of multi-colored varieties can look ghastly.

The most beautiful and expensive plants are cutting grown to keep their color complexities and leaf shapes. When grown in containers, you can get up-close and personal to enjoy those spectacular colors. They are worth growing! If you can afford it, purchase several for containers but not for flower beds.

New varieties are now bred to develop fewer flowers. Yes, less flower formation! The tiny blue blossoms on thin stems can distract the overall look of the plants when they are growing in the garden and, especially, in containers.

Although they can tolerate more sunlight than older varieties, they still grow and look best in partly shady areas. The full intensity of sunlight will damage the leaves, developing brown splotches and faded colors.

Now, what is out there for you to find and grow? A trip to your large garden center is to view several types. There are many varieties to choose from in this section, all having contrasting colors. For solid colorations, scroll down for their specific leaf coloration. A word of joyful warning — you will become addicted to growing these plants!

Fuchsia – Ladies Eardrops

Fuchsia austromontana 'Autumnale'



To brighten any cool, shady areas, you can't go wrong displaying the hot colors of cascading fuchsia flowers. Visit any garden center and prepare yourself for the overwhelming beauty of stunning colors and abundance of bloom.

The colorfully gaudy sepals and billowy petals are usually bicolored (sometimes tri-colored) of rosy-red, white, pink, and royal purple.

A few varieties grow upright but lack the height to look their best. Planting these in containers and placing them on a patio or deck will look more attractive. One example of planting, and, by chance, having multi-colored leaves is "**Autumnale.**"

Bred in 1880, somewhere in France, this fuchsia has chartreuse leaves highlighted with golden yellow to copper-orange-red in younger growth. Surprisingly, these beautiful colorations only develop by late summer into fall when the weather gets chilly, thus the varietal name occurs in autumn.

That doesn't mean there is no other enjoyment to be experienced with this plant. Like all other fuchsia plants, it produces plenty of vivid neon pink and purple tubular flowers throughout the summer.

On average, this plant grows to nearly two feet but compensates with plenty of side branching, making an excellent display in hanging baskets or garden wall containers.

The plants will bloom well if displayed under an overhang or trellis structure to prevent excessive exposure to sunlight. Make sure they grow in moist, fertile, well-drained soil.

You may come across a few potted plants in garden centers but more likely in rare plant nurseries or those featured online.

Pelargonium – Zonal Geraniums

Pelargonium x hortorum “**Velma Cox**” and “**Dolly Varden**”



Earlier, we described “**Wilhelm Langguth**” as having the standard white-rimmed variegation. Some geranium varieties “push the envelope” by having multi-colorful variegations all in the same leaf.

Some rare varieties have yellow-edged leaves with bronze interiors or bronze banding within green centers. Shown above is “**Velma Cox**” (sometimes more formally introduced as “**Mrs. Henry Cox**” thank you) sporting tri-color leaves; bright yellow rims surrounding a bronze-red-purple and green interior. Not to be outdone, the plant provides you with gorgeous soft salmon-orange blossoms for most of the summer.

First grown in 1879, it remains popular with Pelargonium enthusiasts and gardeners. Don't attempt to hunt for this plant in garden centers because you'll waste your time. Instead, perform an internet search for rare plant nurseries.



Another similar variety, but less vivid, is **Dolly Varden**. *“Well, hello Dolly!”* (Sorry, I could not help myself.) Dolly (shown above) has more pale leaf features than **Velma Cox**, having a soft yellow to cream ring around a central area of bronze and green. There may be an occasional glint of pink or red within the leaves. The ever-blooming flowers are vivid red, which adds to the uniqueness of this great geranium. *“Ah, you’re lookin’ swell, Dolly!”*

This geranium is also very rare, so you will need to perform an internet search to find a nursery that offers it.

Although most geraniums make good bedding subjects, the above two varieties are too expensive to delegate to a bed or border. They make

excellent container or potted subjects, and when transferred indoors to a windowsill by fall, they will continue blooming over the winter. You will be glad you did!

Zea – Variegated Ornamental Corn

Zea mays 'Variegata'



Well, it's not every day that we include corn plants in a flower garden. We can have this variety anytime and anywhere, for it provides heavily variegated leaves — white stripes and pink and yellow bands. The pink shades are usually on the periphery of each blade.

This corn plant will form pollen-bearing dark purple tassels and the silk-laden 'ears' by midsummer, eventually forming a few entrenched fertile red kernels.

This amazing ornamental corn became famous in the 1890s as the **Japanese Striped-Leafed Maize** but, strangely, is not more well-known. I guess we will have to grow flowers in ornamental beds and

borders and leave the vegetable plants solely in the vegetable garden or farm fields. Nonsense! Become daring to raise a crop of this corn in an area of your flower garden.

Garden centers rarely offer seeds, so your best bet is to locate them in seed catalogs — especially those publications that cater to providing rare types of ornamental plant seeds.

As with all corn plants, grow them in full to partial sunlight and in well-drained, fertile soil. You can raise this variety in larger pots and containers to place them where you need to give your gardening friends and relatives something to admire and talk about (namely, your sanity in growing corn in a pot.)

Ferocious Red, Mystifying Purple, and Seductive Black

We now venture into the dark side of gardening. No, not the criminal underworld of growing flowers (as if something like this exists), but limiting the spectrum to only one shade of color.

Here, this section represents leaf colors of primarily red to garnet, purple, and “almost” black shades. Plants will increase the concentrations of red-producing pigments, specifically anthocyanins, within the leaves to achieve these darker colors. Some plants appear black in shadier locations while looking deep garnet in bright sunshine.

It is unknown, at present, why plants will develop these darker-colored leaves. Anthocyanin compounds may help protect the leaves from the sun’s ultraviolet light. The green chlorophyll pigment necessary for functional photosynthesis is still present but masked with these deeper red pigments. Purple plants result from changes in the pH level within the plant tissues of various plants.

No matter the reason, these dark-colored plants will attract immediate attention when planted alongside yellow to silvery-white leafy plants described later. Well, let’s say “vice versa,” for the dark varieties will also highlight these other colorful leaves. In most cases, it is the foliage that steals the show!

Acer – Japanese Maple

Acer palmatum



When considering which colorful leafy plant to grow specifically in a garden or landscape, we usually think of trees, especially maple trees, for their fall colors. The Japanese Maple is no exception and also adds beauty to the other seasons.

Native to the regions of both South Korea and southern Japan, this is probably the quintessential shrub or small tree to provide a spectacular-looking “centerpiece” for any flower garden bed. Just enjoy those fabulous bright red leaves from spring to fall.

Most varieties do not become excessively tall, so you do not have to worry about them becoming towering giants. Maybe in a century, the

future occupants of your home will wonder why it grew there but don't worry about it.

You can find examples of different varieties at your local larger garden center or tree nurseries. Some types have the typical maple-leaf design, while others have finely dissected or lacy foliage. No matter when in the growing season, you can expect the vivid coloration of these leaves will attract plenty of attention and admiration.

Also, consider the tree's shape, for you can choose from upright or weeping (or cascading) forms that also play an integral part in the aesthetics of the overall appreciation of the tree's beauty.

There has to be a downside to growing them. It never fails, doesn't it? This tree is reliably hardy from zones 5 to 8 and suffers on either side of this range. Too cold or hot will stunt the growth or eventually kill the tree.

Another limitation is its slow growth rate. Depending on its size when planted, it can take years to form a magnificent leafy tree. Oh well, that's par for the course when planting trees. Let's think of it as planning and planting for future enjoyment instead of the "here-and-now" look.

Like all other maple trees, it prefers full to partial sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. Avoid exposure to strong winds, which will damage the leaves and weaken the entire tree.

Larger garden centers should offer several varieties of this maple. By late spring, when the foliage expands, is a great time to compare their size, shape, and color. I would not recommend purchasing the tree solely because of the label description or photo. The label could be wrong, or the picture colorfully exaggerated.

I usually recommend waiting until fall to plant trees and shrubs to avoid summer stress, but insert it in a well-dug and composed-enriched hole if you promise to take good care of it.

Begonia – Wax Begonia

Begonia semperflorens



Famous as a bedding and container plant for its everblooming colorful blossoms, this species will display the usual green succulent foliage and reddish-bronze leaves for all-summer enjoyment. This darker color can grow well in sunnier locations than the green-leafed types.

All begonias need to succeed is well-drained, fertile soil. A constant wet medium will cause the roots and stems to rot.

You can raise several seed-sown plants, but be aware that those seeds are almost dust-like in size. Plus, the seedlings that germinate will take several weeks to grow to a transplantable size. Do yourself a favor and

purchase flats of plants from your local nursery. You will find varieties that differ in growth size and bloom with white, red, or pink flowers.

Brassica – Ornamental Kale and Cabbage

Brassica oleracea



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Also known as “flowering kale and cabbage,” these plants are not, in the strictest sense, as being enjoyed for their flowering — instead, their combined overlapping leaf arrangements resemble that of a multi-petaled rose.

No law states you cannot grow pretty vegetable plants in your flower garden. Well, I hope there are no such laws, but in this topsy-turvy world, who knows? If purchasing expensive *Caladium* plants is not in your budget, you can grow these highly colorful leafy plants. Their thick

leaves exhibit vibrant colors (and contrasting hues), from creamy yellow to deep pinks, purples, and reds.

Most, if not all, varieties have the inner-most diameter of leaves showing vibrant colors while the outside areas are deep green to purple. The cabbage types all have those excessive colonies of thick waxy leaves and eventually form small heads, while the kale displays plenty of ruffled, feathery, or curly foliage.

Chefs rarely recommend them for culinary purposes, for their flavor is bland or bitter, plus they have a ghastly gray-colored appearance after being cooked. Their primary culinary purpose is as an outstanding dinner table centerpiece. Enjoy their magnificent colors by cutting the stems and inserting them into a shallow water bowl.

A Thanksgiving dinner table setting will undoubtedly be a fantastic sight for American gardeners. Just be sure there are no hitchhikers such as slugs or snails, for they will certainly be an even more memorable — but unwelcome — sight and dining experience!

There is no apparent reason you cannot grow them as unusual subjects in a flower bed or border. As long as you raise them in sunny, well-drained, fertile soil, they will grow quickly and develop nice-sized heads of vibrant, colorful plants.

All cabbages and kale are easy to raise from seed. Many seed catalogs offer different varieties of these plants. Most seeds offered are for mixed colors of plants. Some nurseries may grow starter plants but limit which colors they offer.

For best growth, try to transplant young plants in midsummer. Most varieties do not tolerate excessive summer heat. Their best colors will appear by early fall. They can handle freezing temperatures, but extreme Arctic-like cold weather will kill them. Then, after the leaves thaw and rot, you will immediately notice a smelly aroma (like over-cooked broccoli) emanating from within the garden and precipitating the wrath of the surrounding neighborhood.

Capsicum – Pepper

Capsicum annum “Black Pepper”



No, this is not your powdered seasoning, but another fantastic example of a type of hot garden pepper you may find in your nearest garden center. Like the previous example of the “**Variegated Fish Pepper**” described in the variegated leaf section, this variety has almost true-black leaves.

The small fruit (the peppers) develop dark green, then change to black and a bright red when totally ripe. They are edible, but you may wish to leave them alone to appreciate the stunning contrast of color.

Like all garden peppers, raised this beautiful variety in well-drained, fertile soil. Expect it to grow over two feet tall and wide. It will grow

taller in warmer, longer growing season climates.

When raised in well-drained, fertile soil, mature plants can grow two feet tall and wide (taller in warmer climates with a longer growing season).

Finding seeds of this variety to grow in your garden may be a challenge. Your best bet is to check with businesses specializing in selling rare seeds or plants.

Coleus

Coleus blumei “Red Head”



Although reviewed in the previous section on multi-colored variegation, several newer Coleus varieties have single-color displays or variations of enhanced contrasting leaf vein colorations.

The more unique varieties transform beds, borders, and containers into wondrous beauty with vibrant reds and oranges, some highlighted with yellow and even purple.

As I mentioned before, try to have a bed or border of similar-looking Coleus plants, either identical coloration or related shades. For instance, the above photo represents a bed of vibrantly colorful “**Red**

Head” Coleus. Similar orangish shades of closely associated types are available in many garden centers or plant catalogs.

Colocasia – Elephant Ears

Colocasia esculenta “Black Coral”



This is the closest thing to standing next to an elephant, so prepare yourself to be amazed, awed, and slightly overwhelmed when you first encounter it.

This plant is amazing! I had mixed feelings at a garden center when I first met it. Thrilled, its enormous height and the massive leaves and flowers intimidated me. I felt like Lemuel Gulliver in Jonathan Swift’s *“Gulliver’s Travels.”* It was when he encountered the land and giant people of Brobdingnag.

Growers nickname it “Elephant Ears” or “Taro.” The leaves have a coarse texture with prominent veins, but some have exciting leaf colors.

Some varieties have the usual green, but many have bronze and even pure black (dark-purple) leaves.

There are clusters of large, white arum-like flowers. Just like the leaves, they are also larger than usual. The flower has a modified leaf called a spathe, and the stamens or pistils are on the central yellow spadix. There is also a slightly foul odor associated with these flowers, which attract pollinating flies.

Easy to grow from bulbs, we can plant Elephant Ears in the garden (remember, it needs plenty of space) or enormous pots — like halved whiskey barrels.

It prefers fertile, well-drained soil, plenty of water, fertilizer, and full sunlight to partial shade to get the maximum growing size.

The bulbs are hardy from zones 8 to 11, but a freeze will kill the outermost leaves. Northern growers will need to bring the potted bulbs indoors or in a heated garage for the winter.

You can find them in many larger garden centers or online bulb specialty nurseries.

Dahlia

Dahlia coccinea palmeri



Like many other popular garden flowers, Dahlias will provide you with many multi colorful floral varieties. But having lots of colors does not make any flower group or individual spectacular or unusual. There has to be “something else” that defines this accolade of uniqueness. Besides flower head size and shape, we can also include leaf coloration.

Usually not offered in garden centers (as tubers mixed with moistened sphagnum moss encased in plastic bags), you can reliably find almost-black foliage varieties in online specialty nurseries. Most of these rare varieties have vividly colorful single to semi-double flower heads.

One ancient variety is **Bishop of Auckland** with outstanding pure red single flowers highlighted with yellow anthers and pistils. The **Bishop of Llandaff** is similar but has semi-double flower heads. Both are selections of *Dahlia coccinea palmeri*, an excessively dark-leaved species/variety.

If red does not stop you in your tracks, there is always the newer variety called '**Dark Side of the Sun.**' This one also has almost black foliage but glows with single to semi-double yellowish-orange blossoms. It's a knockout!

Most of these types grow over three feet tall and wide when grown in full sun and compost-enriched, moist loamy fertile soil.

Botanists classify all dahlias as annuals, for they are only hardy from zone 9 to 10. But some types can be winter hardy to zone 6 if covered with a thick mulch in the fall. Make sure to uncover by late spring so as not to smother your sprouting tubers. Otherwise, carefully dig up your tubers in the fall and store them in a bag of moistened potting soil.

You can save and sow the *Dahlia coccinea palmeri* species seeds (if separated from other dahlia types) and transplant them to provide new flowering plants in the summer.

Heuchera – Coral Bells

Heuchera sanguinea “Fire Alarm”



Earlier mentioned about the stunning **Snow Angel** variety, we now go into the fantastic diversity of colorful leafy selections.

Many beautiful varieties are available as bare-root rhizomes or potted plants in most garden centers. You definitely need to find and grow Heuchera “**Fire Alarm**” (shown above), having dazzling orange and bright red leaves.

Years ago, this North American native perennial was a dull green to lightly copper-colored plant. The numerous tiny red, bell-shaped flowers on slender stems were the only redeeming quality. Breeders

and growers knew it had the potential to form beautiful shade plants. They were right and later created stunningly colorful varieties.

Most of the attention has been to variations of leaf colors. Some plants have solid monochromatic colors, while others sport multiple shades. There are chartreuse, bright coppery-orange, rusty-red, and purple-black varieties.

This hardy perennial (zones 3 to 8) appreciates growing in the morning sunlight and then shade for the afternoon to get the best leaf colors. Constant sunlight (along with dry soil) will “burn” the leaves—making large brown grotesque splotches and leaf edges. These plants can grow in full sunlight only in zone 3 and 4 gardens.

Flower colors are also variable from bright red, pink, and white. Blooming begins from late spring to mid-summer. Don't worry if you have a problematic shady area that may be too dark. Here, concentrate on the flowers instead of the leaf colors. I have seen stunning displays for green-leaf Coral Bells with bright white blossoms. The small but numerous flowers resembled strings of bright LED lights. It was mesmerizing!

The plants will grow best in well-drained, fertile, and moist to partially dry soil. Mature plants will grow into bushy, two-foot-tall clumps and have few insect or disease problems.

Hibiscus

Every flowering plant family has a few exotic members that flaunt their size, color, and bloom. This group of plants is no exception. Being part of the extensive Mallow family, they are tall-growing annual, perennial, or woody tropical shrubs. In this section, let's concentrate on an annual and hardy perennial.

As usual, with all Hibiscus species, their flowers will only last one or two days (like daylilies). The petals unfurl in their full glory during the day but fold up and later drop off by evening.

All varieties prefer to grow in full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. Please water this plant during extended dry spells.

Let's begin with an unusual annual Hibiscus with startlingly colorful foliage.

Hibiscus acetosella “Mahogany Splendor”



First and foremost, don't expect this splendid annual to tender perennial (hardy to zone 9 and 10) to bloom unless you live in a tropical setting — in winter. This species only blooms when exposed to the dwindling day length of the year. No wonder. When I grew this plant, I was expecting plenty of the typical velvety red hibiscus blossoms during the summer, but to no avail. It pays to learn more about your flowering plants before purchasing and growing them.

Oh well, one great substitution for being flower-free is its vivid and eye-catching garnet-hued leaves. I once read this plant referred to as “a poor man's Japanese Maple tree,” for it is simple to grow from seed and, thus, develop several in any location to provide a great blaze of crimson red all summer and into the fall. That excessively long sentence offers all the necessary information to encourage you to raise this annual plant.

Since being grown from seed, some variations or intensities of the red coloration will result (not much, but some). If a particularly striking color of a plant is recognized, you can always gather softwood cuttings by fall, root them, care for them over the winter and plant them out by early summer.

Finding seed can be problematic for not all seed nurseries offer it (why I do not know), but several online nurseries will have it available. Check with your local larger garden centers first if you want a headstart on growing them.

This hibiscus grows well to a modest height of five feet tall and slightly less wide in full to partial sunshine and fertile, well-drained soil. Occasional topmost trimming of shoots will make many side branches.

You can also plant it in large containers on patios or decks, but its most extraordinary beauty is when grown in a bed or border with other contrasting, colorful leafy plants. Be forewarned — you must keep the soil moist, for dry soil will be detrimental to its growth and overall health.

Hibiscus x hybrid “Midnight Marvel” Hardy Rose Mallow



This outstanding variety results from the complex breeding of mixing genes of at least three hardy Hibiscus species native to the United States. Think of it as preparing a complicated gourmet recipe — adding a cup of this, a tablespoon of that, and a pinch of salt. Instead of producing a savory food item, we have a hardy, dark purple, almost black foliage topped with large, gorgeous crimson red flowers all summer. I can only imagine the surprise and the thrill when the breeders grew this hybrid variety for the first time. In terms of gambling, they hit the jackpot by dealing with a winning hand of genetics poker.

Like most other Hibiscus types, blooming begins from mid to late summer. The brilliant red blossoms are so eye-catching when displayed against the almost-black leaves. To achieve the most significant impact of this leaf-to-flower display, you will need to place this plant in full sunlight (most of the time) and in fertile, well-drained soil. Because of

being a large and bushy plant — up to four feet across and wide — make sure it receives periodic watering during dry spells.

Growers report it hardy from zones 4 to 9 — but zone 5 seems more realistic. Well, no matter the coldest zone, make sure to mulch this plant well in the fall to help protect it against winter's wrath. One saving grace for us colder climate gardeners is reports of it being a "sleepyhead" in spring. The buds are slow to begin growth, and this delayed wakefulness helps prevent bud die-back from surprise severe frost damage.

Before venturing forth to your local garden centers to purchase this plant, perform an internet search or call ahead of time to inquire if the center has it available. Because of its complex genetic heritage, I doubt it can produce seeds and can only be propagated by softwood cuttings.

Ipomoea – Ornamental Sweet Potato Vine

Ipomoea batatas “Blackie”



Yes, this is an edible relative of the Morning-glory. This fact surprises many people — yes, even me — but the clues are in plain sight, such as the vine and flower structures (when they bloom, if ever.) However, these plants do not climb; they can grow as an extensive ground cover.

We do not grow ornamental sweet potatoes for the vegetable garden (unless you want an unusual plot), but for containers and, if space is adequate, placed in the flower garden. Growers are now breeding new varieties for different leaf colors and smaller, less viny plants.

In this section, a few types provide near-black leaves and can produce a few but lovely colorful blossoms if nature finds the conditions favorable. They remind me of less flamboyant Coleus plants.

Like any member of the Morning-Glory family, grow these plants in plenty of sunlight. If raised in shady areas, the leaves will revert to more green than black. To prevent having vines from traversing over all exposed areas of your patio, deck, or gardens, don't plant them in excessively fertile soil.

Oxalis – Wood Sorrel; False Shamrock Plant

Oxalis triangularis or *regnellii triangularis*
“Purple Shamrock”



These South American and South African bulbous annual plants can pass as a botanical doppelgänger to clover plants. They have clover-like three-lobed leaves (some have four — lucky you), which resemble shamrocks. It will not confuse ‘you Irish folk’, but it may do so with many other people.

When in bloom from early to late summer, you can immediately tell they are not clover, for they have clusters of five-petaled white to pink blossoms. Some *tetraphylla* varieties have beautiful rose-red flowers.

Look for the four-lobed type called “**Iron Cross**,” for a dark burgundy “cross shape” is in the center of each green leaf. Its flowers are stunning rose pink.

Oxalis are tender bulb-forming plants hardy to zones 7 to 10, but a few species can muster zone 6 if well mulched. You can transform it into a houseplant if given plenty of light. Most Oxalis prefer sunny locations in a garden setting but can tolerate some shade. Our specific example of a dark-leaved species/variety will like bright sunlight to display the leaf coloration.

The varieties sold for gardens are well-behaved but slowly spread when grown in higher growth zones. Wild species can become weedy and be a damned nuisance to gardeners and greenhouse growers.

The “**Purple Shamrock**” variety (shown above) has either wine or reddish-purple to dark purple leaves. The flowers are white — some with an added hint of pink. Compared to other plants listed in this ebook, they offer little of the “WOW factor” to be included in a garden setting. Still, if grown in containers, they are noticeable for the leaf color and mistaken as clover. That will cause visitors to ask, “*Why are you growing those weird clover plants?*” Play along and simply say, “*Because they are weird.*” Weird is good in any flower garden!

Garden centers may have these two varieties (and others) available as potted plants for transplanting into your late spring garden or containers. Specialty growers should have dormant bulbs available for springtime sales.

Strobilanthes – Persian Shield

Strobilanthes dyerianus



Native to Myanmar (not Persia — someone did not know where they were apparently), this tropical plant has dark green leaves and incorporates glowing or shimmering blue and iridescent purple. If you grow this plant in fertile, well-drained soil in a partly sunny location, expect to be overwhelmed by the sheer intensity of this coloration. It is just the ticket to transform a bed or border into sheer astonishment.

Have I made myself clear in pleasantly warning you of what to expect from this leafy plant? Good. I want you to experience “the unexpectedness” of growing and enjoying this leafy class act.

The keyword is vegetative, for, in most gardens, it will not bloom unless your garden enjoys late fall and winter warmth. It constantly grows more amazingly colorful leaves all summer.

Nurseries do not grow these plants from seed but as softwood cuttings stuck in pots. Because of this propagation method, their cost will be higher but not excessively expensive. If you enjoy growing and admiring them and wish to have more of them to grow next summer, learn how to take cuttings yourself in the fall and overwinter them indoors. Imagine a large border of these plants thriving next year!

Being tropical, these plants can tolerate wet soil (for a while) but prefer moist, well-drained, fertile loam. Their best leaf coloration occurs when grown in partly sunny locations but avoid exposure to constant sun or shade. They can grow tall, so periodically pinch back the growing shoots to induce plenty of branching side shoots. They look great in a garden setting and make splendid container plantings. What more can we ask for?

Tradescantia – Spiderwort

Tradescantia pallida 'Purpurea'



The wild green-leafed plants are not exciting, but the new hybrid varieties are gorgeous. Hardy from zones 4 to 9, the wild plants have long, blade-like dark green leaves with small (around one inch) three-petaled, blue flowers with bright yellow stamens. If you have never encountered these flowers before, you may think they were small Iris—but they are not.

These flowers bloom in clusters called umbels. A few clusters bloom each day, and each one lasts one day—like daylily blossoms. Over time, a sizeable three-foot-tall group of plants can display hundreds of these tiny blossoms from mid-spring to midsummer.

Sorry, this species or type is not striking, but you can enjoy a deep purple-leafed variety in a shady garden. Its blade-like leaves are almost black — well, not precisely.

The plants can grow in full sun, but the intense light and hot temperatures will make the flowers fade quickly, causing the widows to sob themselves silly. No, these plants prefer part to full shade and can tolerate extended periods of dry soil. While visiting a botanical garden, I saw a bed of these plants thriving and blooming in the dense shade of drought-cracked earth.

I must give breeders of new flowers two thumbs up in developing beautiful hybrid varieties of this eastern North American perennial. For a splendid example, check out the next section of yellow foliage plants and enjoy the type called “**Sweet Kate.**”

We need to tie up a few loose ends for curiosity’s sake. What does Spiderwort mean? One theory is it gets its name from the sticky sap that oozes out of a stem when broken or cut. When this sap air dries, it becomes a whitish, thread-like substance. People thought spiders drank this sap to make their silk for spinning webs. I see. Let’s go to the next theory.

Got bit by a vicious spider? Cut a stem and apply the juice to the wound to neutralize the venom and treat the skin. Theory number two is this sap supposedly helps to heal spider bites. I will vote for this theory since the root word is “wort,” — meaning, a plant used for medical use.

Mellow Yellows

Some garden plants will radiate pure yellow or the richness of gold in their leaves. Usually, especially when the foliage is young, they start out green but mature to chartreuse or pure yellow. Other plants are the reverse, while some begin and end as yellow. Oh, whatever — bright yellow leaves are eye-catching and valuable to brighten any garden. Most of the following plants prefer to grow in full sun, making the leaves more brilliant yellow.

The yellow coloration of most leaves is because of the concentration of a mixture of pigments such as carotene and red lycopene, giving deep yellow or orange colors and xanthophyll displaying bright yellow. The green photosynthesis colorant, chlorophyll, is still present within the tissues but is more prevalent in younger leaves.

As the leaves enlarge and age, the chlorophyll breaks down and exposes these yellow pigments. How bright the yellow becomes depends on soil fertility, moisture, air temperature, and the relative age of the plant.

The yellow coloration in these plants causes differing reactions among people when viewed in a garden. Some people are pleasantly “wowed” by the incredible brightness, while others become repulsed by mistakenly thinking the plants are diseased or suffer from mineral deficiencies.

To calm visitor concerns into thinking you are a lousy gardener by growing sickly plants, don't plant yellow-leafed plants singly. Instead, grow several plants of the same type or other yellow plants together in a larger setting.

To impress those skeptical visitors, add contrasting dark-leafed plants next to these yellow foliage plants. Displaying contrasting leaf colors, textures, and sizes provides instant garden appeal. They also secure you as a top-notch gardener.

Coleus

Coleus blumei



Once again, we need to see what these wide and crazy leafy plants are up to now. Previously, we knew Coleus could sport flashy, colorful patterns in their leaves, and now having yellow as the predominant color should not be a surprise. The real surprise is when you see them, primarily grown, in a bed or border. Single plants grown in pots may spark some interest, but when grown in masses, the sight is unbelievable.

I would like to advise you which varieties to grow — here and in the other leaf-color sections — but too many types are available.

Forget about raising Coleus from seed and plan instead to pillage local nurseries and garden centers for cutting-grown varieties. They will be more expensive, but all the selections will be similar when you plant them in the garden.

As stated earlier, grow the same colors together and not mixed arrangements. Coleus plants can be an eyeful of bright colors, so don't go overboard in diverse color schemes.

Dicentra – Bleeding Heart

Dicentra spectabilis or *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* “Gold Heart”



Once known as *Dicentra* (and still is with us diehard gardeners), botanists now classify this outstanding spring-blooming, hardy perennial as *Lamprocapnos*. I'm sorry, but this name sounds like a newly discovered dinosaur fossil or a comical beast straight out of a Dr. Seuss book. No, I will stick with the old name.

For this section, I present a charming variety named “**Gold Heart**,” having bright yellow leaves. As the leaves age, they turn chartreuse while the newer uppermost leaves shine golden yellow. The display is even more enjoyable when the pink and white flowers bloom. Because

it lacks a full photosynthetic ability, it has slower growth and less size — up to two feet. Still, it provides a brilliant display in a partly shady area of your garden.

All *Dicentra* plants are hardy from zones 3 to 9 and grow well in shady locations. It looks great when planted in a woodland setting and is trouble-free if you plant it in moist but well-drained, fertile soil. Dry soil and blistering sun result in poor blooming and premature early dormancy. This dormancy “turns people off” in growing it, for they expect flowers all the time. Sorry, but enjoy the colorful blossoms when they bloom in the spring.

The common name of the flowers perfectly describes them as heart-shaped “puffy” blossoms. They are usually pink, rose-red, or pure white. The pink and red ones are the most stunning, for they resemble a broken heart with the bottom showing a large drop of white blood (think of it as blood plasma). A few varieties offer crimson red drops, giving these flowers a jolt of *NCIS* realism. In some ways, it looks semi-ghastly but is a well-constructed, charming little flower!

You can find this splendid variety in many garden centers and online nurseries.

Heucherella – Foamy Bells

Heuchera x Tiarella hybrid “Mojito”



Sounding like the name of a not-so-famous sister of Cinderella, this genus is a genetic cross of the above Heuchera with a Tiarella plant. This plant has greater adaptability to sunny and hotter climates—even though the plants still grow (and look) best in partly to entirely shady locations. Here, the leaves display several contrasting colors.

Years ago, people considered these plants bland and unappealing. Then, in 2002, the first colorful foliage Heucherella appeared. Later, they created even more genetically enhanced hybrids. These modern hybrid varieties made larger maple-shaped leaves with vivid colors and patterns with higher tolerance to heat and sunlight.

Today, these plants are gaining popularity for planting in partly shady locations. Part of this appeal is in growing them as a multi-colorful groundcover. Most new varieties are smaller, bushy, and slowly spread.

As for the flowers, they are abundant on tall but branching, slender stems. The blossoms are much smaller than Heuchera's but compensate by having more. American growers dubbed them the nickname "Foamy Bells" for the flowers resemble sea foam instead of coral. They bloom from mid-to-late spring with shades of pink and white. Hummingbirds and butterflies in your neighborhood will happily visit these blossoms.

Raise these colorful plants in well-drained, fertile, and moist soil. The Tiarella heritage can tolerate dry ground but quickly perish in soggy ground. Their hardiness is still extreme—from zones 4 to 9.

There is an increasing number of new, colorful varieties introduced each year. Garden centers and nurseries may offer only a few, but specialist online nurseries will provide plenty of them.

Mirabilis – Four O’Clock

Mirabilis jalapa “Limelight”



Without these delightful, colorful, and wonderfully scented annuals, a garden would not be complete. If protected from frozen or excessively wet winter soil, they can be a perennial in zones 7 to 10.

We usually grow them from seed (which is more economical), but you should try other methods. Each plant, by fall, produces a thick, woody taproot or tuber. Even in cold locations, you can carefully dig up their tubers after a killing frost and store them for the winter as you would for Dahlias.

The seed-grown plants can grow over two feet tall and wide, providing you with hundreds of citrus perfumed blossoms during the summer.

Tuber-grown plants will grow by early summer and become huge and covered with thousands of flowers. The fragrance is intoxicating!

Do they actually bloom at 4:00? It depends on how where you plant them. They wait until the evening to bloom if they get mostly sunny conditions. If grown in more shady areas, especially in the afternoon, they can bloom late in the afternoon. One thing is for sure — don't set your watch on them!

Most plants are green, but "**Limelight**" has chartreuse or pale-yellow foliage. Now and then, some streaks or blotches of dark green show up, so you could classify them as reverse-variegated leaves.

This is not some new flamboyant variety but grown in the late 1800s. We still admire it today, not only for the leaves but also for the vivid, neon-bright, 'down-right shocking' rose-pink flowers.

Seeds of this plant may prove challenging to find in garden centers (they always offer mixed-color selections), but many seed catalogs will have it available.

Tradescantia – Spiderwort

Tradescantia x andersoniana “Sweet Kate”



As mentioned before in the Red and Purple-leafed section, some Spiderworts have eye-popping leaf colors. If you need a prime example of what breeders have achieved in creating a colorful variety, please grow “**Sweet Kate**” or its other less personal name of “**Blue and Gold**”. This fascinating and pleasantly gaudy variety has purple-blue flowers nestled among bright yellow leaves. It is a stunning beauty for any shade garden!

Garden centers should (and I demand they should) have this variety and others available for you to grow in your garden. These newer hybrids will adapt to more sunlight as long as they constantly have moist soil.

If breeders could make these plants keep their beautiful flowers longer than a day, they would be ideal. Oh well, maybe we expect too much from certain plants, and we should enjoy them as they are.

Shivering Silvery White

Mother Nature constantly demonstrates an equal and opposite reaction to every action. If some plant foliage is dark, there has to be some displaying brightness. If some leaves resemble red-hot embers, others will be polar white. Better bundle up, for there will be a chill in the summer garden when growing these visually frosted delights.

Of all the non-green colorations of leaves described earlier, these plants are the most popular (based on nursery sales) for displaying contrasting leaf colorations in a garden. They provide a stunning contrast to other leaf colorations and with their flowers. They are explicitly appealing when combined with darker leaf plants.

Unlike the previous sections, these plants have a white or bluish sheen, waxy, or “furriness” to their leaves. This fur extension, called trichomes, arises from the leaf surface’s epidermis. The whole leaf is actually green, but the wax cuticle and trichomes scatter light, so the plant appears gray or white.

Botanists observed that an increase in the thickness, quantity, and length of these extensions has a corresponding increase in whiteness. Depending on genetics and under the best conditions, some plant species can achieve a bright metallic silver based on the density or thickness of the epidermal wax.

Plants adapted to drier and sunnier conditions have their leaf wax or trichomes reduce water loss from the leaves and protect the internal tissues from overheating or being damaged by ultraviolet light. One other great feature is deer really hate eating these plants!

Athyrium – Japanese Painted Fern

Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum'



Never feel unsure about growing an award-winning fern in your shade garden. This one is not an ordinary green fern, although several pretty ones are available. It is distinct from most (if not all) other hardy ferns in having arching, serrated, grayish-green fronds.

The fronds develop a stunning silvery sheen with dark red mid-ribs when grown in bright indirect light. It looks like the plant has a coating of frost! “**Pictum**” (or what some growers and nurseries call “**Godzilla**” to add a more WOW! factor for selling) received the 2004 *Perennial Plant of the Year Award*.

Never plant this fern in hot, bright sunlight or in deep shade. The fronds will turn brown in full sun while turning common-green in deep shade. It sounds like the botanical equivalent of Goldilocks stating two extremes are “no good” while the middle ground is “just right.” Well, it’s right for any garden since botanists consider it a low-maintenance perennial.

This plant grows to under two feet tall and wide, thriving in zones 3 to 8. By all means, try to find a cozy spot in the shade—especially where you spend time in your garden to enjoy this marvel of nature. Many garden centers will have this fern, and a few other species, available each spring.

Brunnera – Siberian Bugloss

Brunnera macrophylla “Jack Frost”



These plants are hardy perennials (zones 3 to 8) and ideal candidates for your shade garden. Most varieties have green leaves, while one popular type called "**Jack Frost**" is silvery-white with green veins. Each older leaf has a multitude of tiny, fuzzy trichomes giving a characteristic roughness.

The leaves are green, but these trichomes give the surface area a frosty sheen. In some ideal conditions, the leaves appear white while the veins are green. In the spring, sprays of small, powder-blue, Forget-Me-Not flowers explode over the plant for a few weeks. How lovely is that? Well, it is that lovely for it received the 2012 *Perennial Plant Association Plant*

of the Year Award. Maybe not as prestigious or as well-known as the Oscar or Emmy Awards, but it's good enough to express excellence.

Plant this very hardy perennial (zones 3 to 8) in a shady to partly shady, moist, well-drained, fertile soil for best looks and blooming.

Since this is an award-winning variety, several garden centers, and online nurseries will have it available for you to purchase.

By the way, just to tie up loose ends, the common name of "bugloss" is Greek and references the shape and roughness of an ox tongue. Yes, cows have rough-feeling tongues, just like a kitty cat!

Caladium – Angel Wings

Caladium bicolor “Miss Muffet”



As mentioned earlier, in the multi-colorful variegated section, some fantastic white-leaved varieties are available from specialty nurseries of larger garden centers. Some have additional splotches of color, but most showcase their green veins.

White or silver-leaved varieties need partly shady areas to look fabulous. Partly shady, in this case, means bright indirect light or dappled sunlight. Harsh sunlight will burn the leaves and form hideous brown spots and leaf edges. The deep shade will produce elongated floppy leaves — not pretty in both extremes.

Please wait to plant these bulbs until the outdoor soil is warm to prevent stunted growth, as noted earlier in the multi-colorful section.

Look for the varieties called **White Christmas**, **Miss Muffet** (your garden can supply a spider or two), **Fiesta**, having stunningly vivid red venation, and **Moonlight**, having pure-white leaves edged with green. They are all magnificent!

How can these plants grow without having green chloroplasts for photosynthesis? Some white Caladiums have green areas — on the rim of each leaf or in the central veins. For almost all-white varieties, the theory is that the leaf cells contain chloroplasts, but the cell walls bend light wavelengths and appear white. Don't worry about understanding it — just enjoy the show!

Centaurea – Dusty Miller or Silver Dust

Centaurea cineraria



Of all the plants listed in this ebook, this one and *Senecio cineraria* (described later) have given me a migraine headache. It concerns their common nickname of “Dusty Miller.” They are a prime example of why the Latinized naming of genus and species is essential in distinguishing between two or more similar-looking but unrelated plants.

While researching the common garden plant name of “Dusty Miller” via the internet, these two genera kept cropping up haphazardly as being “the real McCoy.”

“Wait a minute,” I thought, “Both types of plants swear they are Dusty Miller. This is so confusing!” Well, the confusion is over, and I believe —

crossing my fingers — I have separated both “Millers” into their respective accurate descriptions. If not, please reverse the bold font names, but leave the descriptive parts alone. Now, let’s get this derailed ebook train back on track....

Many gardening people and I consider *Centaurea cineraria*, the ever-popular annual bedding plant grown for its bright, silvery-white leaves, as the true Dusty Miller. Depending on the variety, the appearance of these leaves ranges from being “whole leafed” to lacey or serrated, which adds a stunning contrast to other colorful annuals and perennials grown in the garden.

This plant makes an impressive display or highlights dull, partly shady areas when grown in a container. Most varieties grow only to less than two feet tall but can be bushy. From many accounts, deer seem to avoid eating this plant — possibly by learning to avoid any bright white plants that make them gag.

Although considered an annual, it is actually a tender perennial in less subarctic locations. As long as you grow it in plenty of sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil, it will thrive for your summer enjoyment. I have had this plant survive my zone 5 garden — once — but the odds are better in living through a zone 7 and up winter.

It makes a great edging plant to complement brightly colorful annual flowers or, in our present case, colorful or darkened foliage plants. The same concept applies to container plantings. There is no gardening law (at least, not yet passed by Congress) that states you can’t have an entire bed or border of them. Imagine... the appearance of snowdrifts in summer or a glowing moonlight-enhanced bed at night.

This plant can form small flowers during the summer months but is an irritating distraction. Most people snip them off to keep the shiny leafy appearance intact.

You can grow this plant via seeds or purchase starter plants in garden centers.

Eryngium – Sea Holly

Eryngium maritimum



This hardy perennial should suffice if you wish to add some decorative bling to your flower borders. The common name is fitting for having waxy, spiny, thistle-like leaves and naturalized for sandy coastal locations. You don't have to live near the seaside, for these plants will adapt well in rock gardens or borders supplemented with gravel-enhanced garden soil. The leaves are usually silvery-gray, while some have an attractive blue tint.

The flower heads and surrounding bracts also have these shiny appearances, some varieties more so. They look like large ice crystals or snowflakes.

Hardy from zone 5 and up, Sea Holly is native to sun-soaked coastal beaches of Europe. Clumps of plants can grow to three feet tall and wide and bloom midsummer until fall.

Being exposed to the harsh sun and salt spray, the entire plant adapts to overheating and water loss by secreting a reflective waxy coating. What a strange paradox — naturally growing in hot, sunny locations while looking like ice crystal props in Disney's animated *Frozen* movies.

Years ago, wild plants were common near sand dunes. Today, botanists discover fewer populations because people steal them for their flower gardens. This does not have to be, for you can grow attractive varieties from seed or purchased nursery plants.

Eucalyptus – Silver Dollar Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus cinerea



Are you ready to bring a “down under” look to your garden? Take a deep breath and plant this Australian native tree (hardy only to zones 9 or 10) that has that unique fragrance we can identify with when having a cold or the flu. They are one of the principal ingredients for medications to ease a sore throat, stuffy nose, or persistent cough.

One common species, nicknamed the **Silver Dollar Eucalyptus**, has rounded, silver dollar-sized leaves attached around the stem. The leaves are dull silver-gray, and when dried, we can still smell that characteristic fragrance.

This plant thrives in full sunlight, well-drained soil, and occasional neglect. You can use it as either freshly cut stems inserted into water (having a vase life of nearly a month) or leave them to dry and later add to an empty vase.

Seeds and plants are available at many garden centers and in seed catalogs. The advantage of growing your own plants is they always regrow after cutting a stem. You can plant them in a large container or in the flower bed, but make sure you cut a few branches in the summer and air dry them for creating scented indoor displays.

Helianthus – Sunflower

Helianthus argophyllus “Gold and Silver”



Our favorite star is 93 million miles above our head — give or take a few feet. Here, on our favorite planet, *Helianthus* attempts to stretch to a tiny fraction of that distance. It shares one stellar quality — the ability to mimic the sun’s brilliance, but to a lesser extent.

Most commercially available sunflower seeds are of annual varieties. We are all familiar with the large seed heads of massive, tall plants nodding over by the side of vegetable or flower gardens.

Over recent years, interest in wildly colorful sunflowers has gained a “cult following.” New and unusual varieties have emerged with advances in genetics on the gardening scene. Most of this advancement is with the color and size of the small to extra-large flower heads.

Sometimes, you will encounter a species or variety that causes you to stop and stare. For an extra “solar” flare, grow the species/variety called *Helianthus argophyllus* “**Gold and Silver**”. Its major attractions are its golden-yellow flower-heads and furry, silvery stems and foliage. It is stunning — especially when it shines and sparkles in the sunlight!

Seeds of several varieties — tall and short — are available in many seed catalogs, and to a lesser extent, in garden centers.

Salvia – Silver Sage

Salvia argentea



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We grow most Salvia plants for their colorful flowers and concentrate less on their green leaves. Then there is the **Silver Sage**. This species has expanding colonies of wooly, downy, furry, or fuzzy silvery-or gray foliage. These leaves are also wrinkly and large, up to six inches long and slightly less wide. New leaves are the brightest silver but become duller and greenish-gray as they mature. Nevertheless, they re-shine the summer sunshine.

As a biennial, this species develops plenty of foliage this year but forms its flower spikes the following early summer. The hooded flowers are

usually white clustered within the equally white, leafy, three-foot-tall stems.

Hardy from zones 5 to 8, you can grow this species from seed or transplant young plants in a well-drained, fertile, sunny area. Avoid constant wet spots because it will kill these and other Salvia plants.

After flowering, cut off the flower stems to prevent excessive seed formation and self-sowing.

Senecio – Dusty Miller

Senecio candicans “Angel Wings®”



As I explained earlier in confusing detail, this species and the *Centaurea* plants look almost alike and refer to themselves as Dusty Miller. Fine. Whatever. To avoid a further train wreck of descriptions, I singled out one notable species/variety for all of us to grow in a flower garden. The varietal name of **Angel Wings**® is appropriately accurate in having larger, rounded leaves and being as bright as a white cloud.

Like most other furry-white plants, this one enjoys plenty of sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil to consider itself as being in heaven on earth. Once well established, it can tolerate dry soil for extended periods. That is a bonus when displaying it as an outstanding container or potted subject.

The only fault it unfortunately has is its cold hardiness zone 8 limitation. For us cold-climate gardeners, we have to accept it as an annual, but it shows promise of being a winter-over houseplant if given a warm, sunny windowsill to bask in.

Cutting-grown and offered only as potted plants, garden centers, and larger nurseries should have this variety available. If not in your area, try an internet search of rare-plant nurseries.

Like any other plant saying its name is Dusty Miller, it will help highlight other leafy plants or their colorful flowers. Then again, growing it only in a bed or border is an ethereal sight.

Stachys – Lamb’s Ears

Stachys byzantina



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Considered one of the easiest perennials to grow, *Stachys* is also one of the more enjoyable. The reason is with those thick, snow-white felted leaves that children (and us Peter Pan-ish adults) enjoy touching. You can't go wrong in adding this plant to a garden for lovers of fuzzy-wuzzy, woolly, silvery-white leaved perennials or baby sheep (who doesn't?). One other plant that comes to mind for touchy-feely pleasure is the "pussy-willow" catkins of *Salix* trees.

Primarily grown as an edging plant, you can also transform it into a groundcover if you have enough plants available. Over the growing

season, a single plant can spread to four feet wide. Since it is very hardy (from zones 4-9), each succeeding year will make it spread outward even more. Some growers feel it can become invasive, but there should be no problems with regular pruning of out-of-bounds creeping plants.

One of its best uses is planting this perennial in problematic areas where other plants cannot grow well. It tolerates many soil types but prefers well-drained and sunny locations. One problem — if not fatalistic — area is with constant wet soil.

One other benefit of adding this plant to any perennial garden is it repels deer. They hate the taste and feel of the fuzzy leaves in their mouth. One bite and they immediately decide to graze on those yummy Hosta plants next door.

Lamb's Ears produce tall, soft-pink flower spikes in the summer and are beautiful cut-flowers since they last a long time in arrangements.

Conclusion

This ebook highlights only a fraction of the variegated or colorful plant foliage available to a home gardener. No matter which flowering annual, perennial, shrub, or tree you can grow, at least one representative displays colorful foliage.

We should consider the above varieties as a guide to locating similar colorful types. Some online nurseries change their names to help increase sales. Over time, growers will find new and better varieties while older varietal names become less available.

We can expect many trees and shrubs to change glorious leaf colors in the fall, but some provide colorful enjoyment throughout the growing season. I have purposely neglected to include many of these plants because they take longer to grow. You should not exclude them in your garden and landscaping plans.

Variegated and multi-colorful plants will look more stunning when displaying pleasant contrast or complementary or matching colors. Growing hodge-podge displays will look shocking but, ultimately, unremarkable.

You are a botanical artist. Your garden is your canvas. Transform part of your flower garden or landscape into a foliage garden painted with glorious splashes of natural pigments. By growing these eye-catching plants, your garden will be a masterpiece displayed all summer and into the fall.

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this publication and plan to include plenty of colorful foliage plants in your garden, landscape, and containers. Go wild with growing lots of colorful flowers and leaves!

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com> concerning my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, "I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs." Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "read about it, see it, grow it, and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.