

## Inside

2

### Finish With a Flourish

*A fabulous finale in the perennial garden*

**Meet: Gene Sumi**

3

### Gardening Activities

*Lawn Care Weekend  
Spring Flowering Bulbs  
Fall Festival, and more*

### Holiday Bulletin

*Dept. 56 Events  
Holiday Craft Workshops  
Holiday Open House  
Poinsettia Tours*

4

### Mums are Autumn Gold

*Plant perennial mums for seasonal accent*

5

### Planting in Fall

*Despite popular belief in favor of spring, fall is the superior time to plant*

6

### Renovate Your Lawn

*An Autumn Lawn Guide*

### Bring the Color Indoors

*Houseplants can echo the outdoor autumn display*

7

### Drying Herbs in Frigid Air

#### Garden Recipes:

*Spicy Zucchini Patties  
Pico de Gallo*

8

### Forcing Bulbs

*Spring blooms in winter*

## Harvest Beauty in the Fall

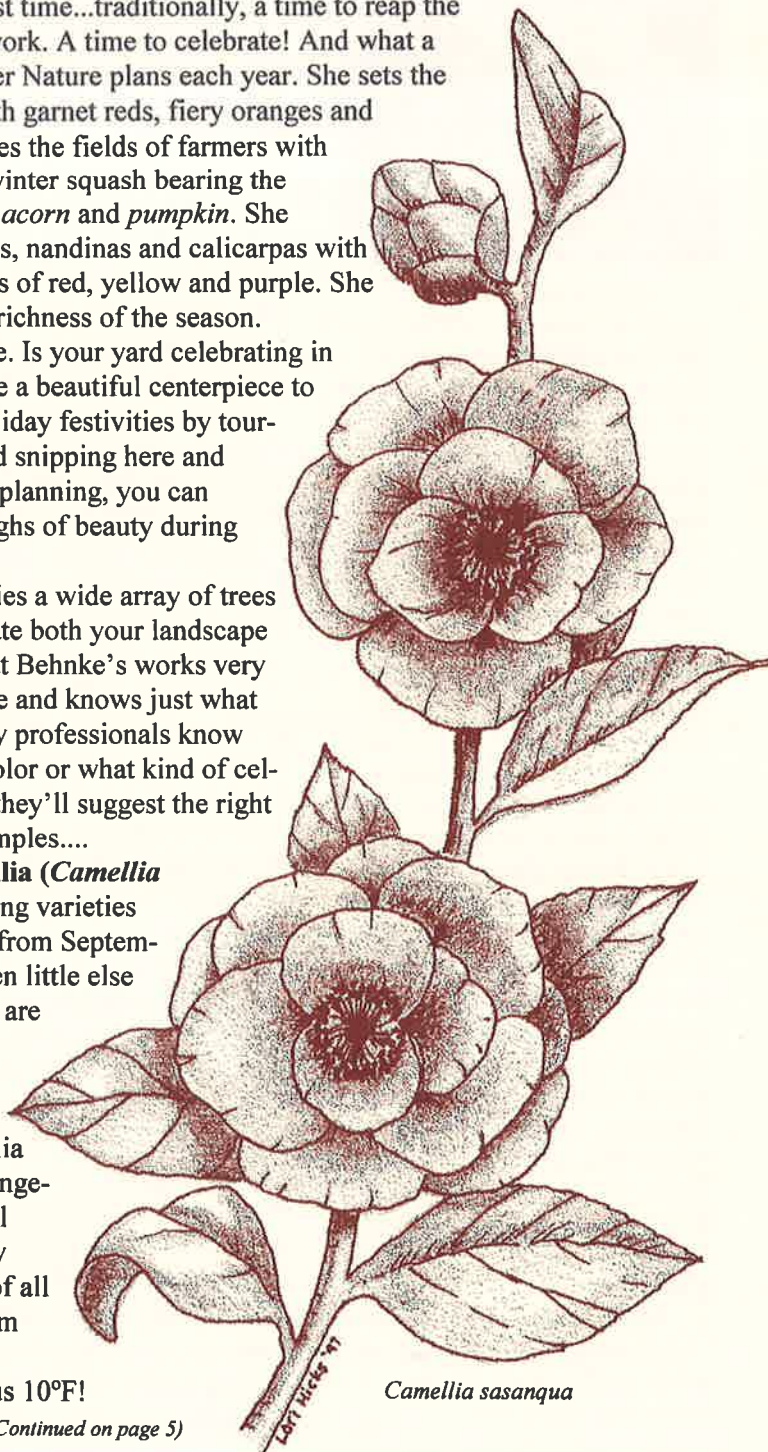
— by Helmut Jaehnigen, Director of Woody Plants, Beltsville

**A**h, autumn...harvest time...traditionally, a time to reap the rewards of hard work. A time to celebrate! And what a celebration Mother Nature plans each year. She sets the skyline ablaze with garnet reds, fiery oranges and dazzling yellows. She graces the fields of farmers with an abundance of colorful winter squash bearing the names *hubbard*, *butternut*, *acorn* and *pumpkin*. She loads bushes such as hollies, nandinas and calicarpas with decorative berries in shades of red, yellow and purple. She paints plants to reflect the richness of the season.

Look to your landscape. Is your yard celebrating in full regalia? Can you create a beautiful centerpiece to grace your table during holiday festivities by touring around your garden and snipping here and there? With a little garden planning, you can adorn your home with boughs of beauty during the autumn months.

Behnke Nurseries carries a wide array of trees and shrubs that will decorate both your landscape and your home. The staff at Behnke's works very closely with Mother Nature and knows just what she's up to. Let our nursery professionals know when you want the most color or what kind of celebrating you are doing — they'll suggest the right plants. Here are a few examples....

**Fall-Blooming Camellia (*Camellia sasanqua*)** The fall-blooming varieties are beautiful. They bloom from September through December when little else does. Their lustrous leaves are evergreen, making them an ideal foundation plant for your semi-shady landscape. Furthermore, camellia flowers, whether in an arrangement or floating in a crystal bowl, bring ultimate beauty into your home. And best of all the new National Arboretum Hybrids can withstand temperatures down to minus 10°F!



*Camellia sasanqua*

(Continued on page 5)

## Meet: Gene Sumi



Gene Sumi, newly promoted to Manager of Customer Service, started his career at Behnke Nurseries in March of 1993 after retiring from the United States Army Signal Corps. He chose Behnke's for his second career because, as the area's premier nursery, it offered him the opportunity to put into use all the skills he had acquired over the years. "I didn't just want to work for a nursery, I wanted to work at Behnke Nurseries," says Gene.

Gene has gardened all his life. He had worked with his father, a professional gardener in California, throughout high school; then worked in a major nursery to pay his way through Chapman College, where he earned degrees in history and psychology. As a U.S. Army officer, he gardened all over the world, trying to grow peonies in Germany, zinnias in Korea, and vegetables in the 107° heat in Texas. These experiences give him a vast background of gardening knowledge that he will gladly share with you.

Gene and his wife Jan have two daughters — Michele, who works in Behnke's Garden Shop, and Anne. ☺

## Finishing With A Flourish

— by Randy Best, Perennial Specialist, Beltsville

**A**lbert Behnke, founder of Behnke Nurseries, knew that the dream of spectacular fall color could be brilliantly realized with perennials. No other group of plants is more versatile. Here is a list of tried and true favorites that give good results time and time again.....

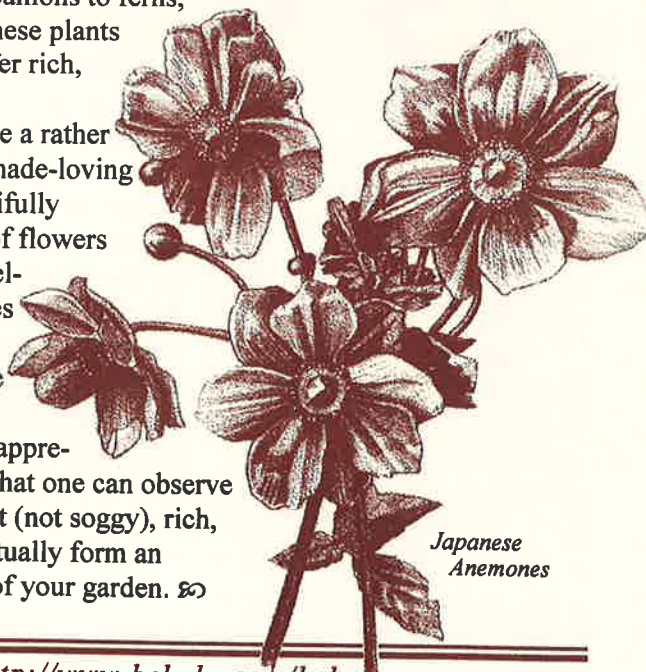
**Sedum:** There are many sedums which are worthy additions to the fall garden, including the familiar *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy.' But among some of the lesser known varieties some real gems stand out. For example, *Sedum* 'Vera Jameson' sports a dusky rose flower and lavish purple foliage, and *Sedum sieboldii*, with blue-green foliage edged in pink, bursts forth with gorgeous pink flowers beginning in September. *Sedum* 'Frosty Morn' is a truly unique find with waxy blue-green foliage edged in silver and flowers which open a shimmering snow white and begin to blush with the faintest tinges of pink as the autumn nights become cooler.

**Boltonia:** With slender blue-green foliage and impressive height, boltonias form a spectacular mound of small aster-like flowers. The variety 'Snowbank' carries a profusion of white daisies with yellow centers. The variety 'Pink Beauty' has blooms which are carried atop the plant like a delicate pink cloud. Due to the sheer mass of flowers, staking is a must. Boltonias do best in full sun and tolerate a wide variety of soil conditions. Try some in combination with sedums and ornamental grasses.

**Nipponanthemum:** This perennial, also known as Nippon daisy or Montauk daisy, covers itself with large white-rayed, yellow-centered daisies. Often confused with Shasta daisy, the Nippon daisy is a very distinctive addition to the fall garden. To look its best, this plant needs a little pinching back in early June to hold it to a compact two to three feet. Don't pinch back after mid June! This could delay the flowering until late fall, risking frost damage to the blooms. This plant blooms from September to first frost, nicely filling a void in the cutting garden. Nippon daisies tolerate a wide range of conditions but prefer full sun and well-drained soils.

**Anemone x hybrida - Japanese Anemones:** These sensational plants produce great sprays of flowers in late summer and early fall. Flower types range from pink and white single blooms to very decorative double-flowered varieties. The sturdy, handsomely lobed, deep green foliage grows in a great range of heights to fill many niches. Anemones are natural companions to ferns, hostas and shade-loving grasses. These plants thrive best in partial shade and prefer rich, moist soil.

**Tricyrtis, or Toad Lily-** Despite a rather unflattering common name, these shade-loving plants offer some of the most beautifully formed perennial flowers. Masses of flowers can range from white to cream to yellow, but the most intriguing varieties carry flowers of delicate structure with speckles of burgundy or purple on a white background. The blooms of all species and varieties are best appreciated when planted near a path so that one can observe them up close. Tricyrtis prefer moist (not soggy), rich, slightly acidic soils. They will eventually form an impressive stand in a shady corner of your garden. ☺



Japanese  
Anemones

# Gardening Activities

We have a full schedule of educational and entertaining events planned this fall. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us. In one session you'll learn more than you could possibly discover for yourself in several years of gardening. For more detailed information on these activities, pick up a copy of our Fall Activities Bulletin.

## Lawns Everyone will Envy

Beltsville Sat., Sept. 13, 10 am - 2 pm  
Sun., Sept. 14, 10 am - 2 pm

Learn the steps for building a beautiful, healthy lawn. Our experts will present a Lawn Care Lecture at 11 am both Saturday and Sunday, and will be on hand to answer your questions afterwards. We have grown 10 samples of our more popular grass seeds for you to compare.

## Spring Flowering Bulbs

Beltsville Sat., Sept. 20, 10 am - 4 pm

Brent Heath of the Daffodil Mart, noted horticultural author and third generation bulb grower, will present a morning and afternoon in-depth seminar on spring bulbs.

Learn which bulbs are best for various situations, designing tips, planting tools & techniques, and more. Make this the year you really plan for a splash of flowering bulbs next spring. We're excited!

## Gardening for Winter Color Indoors & Out

Beltsville Sat., Sept. 27, 10 am - 4 pm

Our horticultural experts will share their expertise on a variety of subjects:

- Bringing houseplants indoors
- Making your own dish gardens
- Selecting annuals for fall color and spring pizzazz
- Perennials, trees & shrubs for fall and winter interest
- Fall wreaths & decorations to make

## Fall Festival

Beltsville Sat., October 11, 10 am - 4 pm

Join us as we celebrate the coming of the fall season. We'll have a variety of fun & educational activities for all. Refreshments will be available.

10 am: *Perennials for Fall Interest*  
Slide Lecture by Martha Simon  
Pindale of Bluemont Nurseries.

Jane Warner of The Virginia Berry Farm will be on hand to discuss berry varieties and their culture.

## Graham Birkin on Hellebores

Beltsville Sun., October 12, 1 pm

Graham, a noted English plantsman and serious plant collector, will discuss the care and culture of hellebores, and new and exciting varieties that will be offered for sale next year.

## Reblooming Iris Show

Beltsville Sat., October 18, 12 noon

The annual show of the Chesapeake and Potomac Iris Society will be open to the public from 12 noon to 4 pm.

Plan to stop in to see outstanding examples of these plants.

## Plants for Winter Interest Walk

Beltsville Sat., October 25, 2 pm

Our Garden Consultant, Chris Upton, will lead a tour of the nursery grounds and introduce you to some of the best plants to provide color, texture, and attractive silhouettes to your winter garden.

## Because You Asked...

Many of you have inquired about the status of the beautifully landscaped home of the late Rose and Albert Behnke. A local religious group has recently purchased the Burtonsville property, and plans to erect a church on the grounds in a few years. They respect and appreciate the lovely gardens surrounding the home, and plan to maintain as much of the landscaping as possible.

## Holiday Happenings

### Homes for the Holidays - BELTSVILLE CHRISTMAS SHOP, NOVEMBER 1 - 9, 1997

We'll have special savings on Department 56's Snow Village and Dickens Village "Start a Tradition" Sets. A retired Department 56 lighted house will be given away each day of the event. Sign up for the drawing in The Christmas Shop!

### Holiday Open House - IN BELTSVILLE, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1997, 6:30 - 9 PM

Join us for light refreshments and holiday decorating ideas all evening.

### Open House & Poinsettia Tours - IN LARGO, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1997, NOON - 4 PM

Join us at our Largo Open House and our annual tour of our poinsettia greenhouses. A perfect photo opportunity with thousands of magnificent poinsettias.

### Holiday Craft Workshops - IN BELTSVILLE, \$25 TUITION INCLUDES ALL MATERIALS NEEDED

*Holiday Centerpieces*

Saturday, Nov. 15 at 10 am; and again at 1 pm  
Sunday, Nov. 16 at 1 pm

# Perennial Mums Are Autumn Gold

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Dept., Beltsville

I can hardly wait for my geraniums to die. They've had their day in the sun. Although I've enjoyed every minute of their reign in my flower border, one of the joys of gardening in Zone 7 is the marvelous diversity of plants that thrive here. And I want them all. Of course, my space is limited, so they have to share.

Autumn is my favorite season. The swan song of the garden is music to my eyes. My sugar maple explodes in a brilliant cloud of yellow, and the red oak cloaks itself in a rich and royal hue. Pink geraniums just don't cut it. I want the deep jewel tones of garden mums to complete a harmonious autumn palette. Mums complement the fall colors of the foliage and echo the tones of the harvest — tomatoes, corn, pumpkins, and butternut squash. They enhance the season.

In late summer I plant a stunning array of Behnke garden mums. Some are coming into bloom, others are still in tight bud. This ensures a long and leisurely autumn display that will last deep into October and sometimes beyond if the weather cooperates.

Behnke Nurseries grows the finest, most heavily budded mums available, in a staggering selection of colors. This year you can choose from 69 varieties in colors ranging from clear yellow to ruby red to violet — with dozens of shades between — and white. The plants are healthy, well-rounded, and when planted, look as if they've been there for years. I think one Behnke mum is equal to three of anyone else's. They are always show stoppers in my flower border, blooming beautifully and quite reliably all season long.

After they finish blooming, I'm afraid my mums suffer the same fate as my geraniums — I don't try to keep them. I haven't the room. If you have plenty of space you might like to try to winter them over. Plant them carefully, scoring the rootball to free the roots. A dose of transplant solution, such as Dragon Plant Starter®, will stimulate root growth, helping the mums to become established more efficiently, thereby increasing the chances of winter survival. The real threat to mums is not the winter temperatures but the repeated freezing and thawing of the soil, which can heave the plants out of the ground, exposing their roots to the

elements. Well established plants and a layer of mulch applied in late fall will help to minimize this problem.

When growth resumes in the spring remove any dead foliage and carefully clear away the mulch. Now is the time to move your plants to a summer home, if you desire. Happy mums will need to be divided every two years or so, and spring is the time for this, also. Simply dig them up and pull them apart by any means. It can be difficult, but mums will take a great deal of punishment. You'll have fine new plants if you can separate the clump of roots into smaller sections with one to four main shoots. If you choose a cloudy day for moving and/or dividing, you'll have optimum success.

Replant the clumps in well-drained soil. Mix some fertilizer (such as 5-10-5) into the planting soil and drench the newly planted

mums with transplant solution. Water them regularly, supplementing with water soluble fertilizer throughout the spring and summer. To produce thick, bushy plants with lots of buds, pinch off about half an inch from the growing tips whenever the plants produce 4 to 6 inches of new growth. Your final pinching should be no later than mid-July. After that date, the mums will not have enough time to form new flower buds for fall. If your last pinch is much earlier than mid-July, your plants will bloom too soon.

Whether they remain in the flower border or spend the summer in the back of the vegetable patch, your mums will be content to pass the summer in low profile — lying in wait for the next autumn season when they can steal the show once again. ☺

## What's In a Name?

Perennial garden mums have recently been given a new botanical name. Botanists, trying to more accurately classify the huge number of plants being called chrysanthemums, have recently changed *Chrysanthemum morifolium* (perennial garden mum) to "*Dendranthema grandiflorum*." True chrysanthemums are now only annual plants. But despite the name change, perennial mums are still easy to grow.



(Harvest Beauty — continued from page 1)

**Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)** This holly is deciduous (which means it loses its leaves in winter) and produces masses of red berries. Often overlooked, winterberry is ideal for decorating and looks magnificent against a snowy landscape.

**Holly (*Ilex*)** Holly is everyone's first thought for holiday greenery. Behnke's has a grand selection of varieties, each with special attributes. Fast growing 'Nellie Stevens' has large green leaves and big, bright red berries in abundance. And best of all it is self pollinating — no need for a male. Many hollies in the blue holly group offer smaller foliage that is easy to use in arrangements. Their leaves are dark green with bluish stems. They produce abundant crops of red berries. The traditional Christmas holly is the English holly with either green or variegated foliage. And don't forget to check out the hollies which don golden berries. They add a new dimension to decorating.

**Beautyberry (*Callicarpa dictoma issai*)** Relatively unknown to homeowners, this flowering shrub will bloom continually from early July till late September, and then set the prettiest lavender berries along arching branches. In autumn the leaves turn yellow and fall off — exposing more fully the slender branches laden with berries. Beautyberries will thrive with little care almost anywhere.

**Evergreen Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)** The stately, dark green leaves of this plant have contrasting soft brown undersides and are wonderful in arrangements. However, they do need space. An evergreen magnolia can grow 60-80 feet tall and 30-50 feet wide.

**Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*)** This plant is often overlooked until it produces its generous clusters of bright red berries in the fall. These berries will outlast many hollies in arrangements and the reddish leaves add to bouquets in early autumn. This tough little plant grows with little care in partial shade.

**Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)** A native shrub, sweetspire is covered with beautiful white flowers in May and June. However, the real show begins in autumn as the leaves turn a gorgeous, dark red. And unlike the burning bush, which loses its leaves, sweetspire is semi-evergreen, showing off all winter long!

**Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)** This plant is valued not only for its flowers but for its bark as well. In late summer large clusters of flowers are borne atop oak leaf-like leaves. These clusters can be cut and dried for holiday arrangements or left on the bush to dry naturally, adding interest to the winter garden. The beautiful exfoliating, or peeling, bark is especially visible in the winter.

Go outside and look to your landscape this autumn. Mother Nature will be hard at work celebrating. Join in the fun and plant a garden of autumn splendor. ☸

**A**utumn is the best time to plant trees and shrubs. The soil conditions are ideal — the ground is still warm, which encourages rapid root growth. Rainfall is more reliable than in summer, and less likely to evaporate quickly, so soil remains moist longer. Consequently, the need for supplemental watering is reduced. The weather is cool enough not to stress plants (or gardeners), and newly planted shrubs and trees settle in comfortably.

By contrast, in spring the ground is cold, and roots are slower to become established before the stressful heat of summer sets in.

Regardless of whether you plant in spring, summer or fall, it is always a good idea to use a transplant solution, such as Dragon Plant Starter®, to stimulate root growth, and help new transplants become established.



## A Recipe to Renovate Your Lawn

— by Helen Gardiner, Garden Shop Buyer, Beltsville

**A**s most of the plants in your garden wind down and prepare for winter, hardy lawn grasses emerge from the semi-dormancy of summer and begin to grow vigorously. During this period warm soil, cool temperatures, and increased rainfall add up to an ideal environment for lawn renovation. It's not too big a job, although it does require diligence, and the pleasant weather helps to raise you to the task. Before you begin, though, you must remove the weeds from your lawn. If the job is too big to do by hand follow the directions in the box below.

lawn mower	grass seed
gloves (optional)	broadcast spreader (a rotary type)
steel garden rake	topsoil or peat humus or
dethatcher (optional)	Compro® or Leafgro®
Wintergreen® Fertilizer	tamper

- Take one well-weeded lawn and mow very short. Rake vigorously to remove debris. You may need to rent a dethatcher to accomplish this task.
- Generously loosen soil in bare areas with a steel garden rake.
- Fertilize the entire lawn with a seed starter fertilizer, such as Wintergreen®, at the recommended rate.
- Spread seed first, by hand, in bare areas. Cover lightly with approximately ¼ inch of topsoil, peat humus, Compro®, or Leafgro®. Tamp lightly. Then spread seed over the entire lawn at half the "new lawn" rate described on the package.
- Water gently. We recommend using a *Fogg It Nozzle®*. This item, which is available in our Garden Shop, sprays a fine mist and will not dislodge the seed.
- Continue to water lightly several times a day until the seedlings have emerged and are 1 inch tall. At that point, reduce waterings to once a day. When the grass is 2½ inches tall, set the lawn mower to a height of 2 inches and mow the lawn. (Because dull mower blades will uproot young grass plants, it's a good idea to sharpen the blades.) After the first mowing, apply water at a rate of one inch per week if there is no rain.

*Special note:* Germination time for grass seed varies from 7 to 21 days depending on soil temperatures and seed species. Patience and attention after planting are crucial. Once you have started the watering process, you must continue. One afternoon without moisture can wipe out all your seedlings. In addition, soil moisture levels must be maintained to ensure uniform emergence of new grass plants. ☺

### Ridding the Lawn of Weeds

Weeds should be eliminated before renovating a lawn. This process should be started 3 to 5 weeks before seeding the lawn. It may take 2 to 3 applications of contact weed killer, such as Dragon Lawn Weed Killer®, to eradicate the weeds (allow 7 days between applications). You *must* wait 3 weeks after the last application before planting seeds.

Apply the weed killer 3 to 4 days *before* mowing or 3 to 4 days *after* mowing so there is enough leaf surface for the weed killer to contact. After the weeds have browned and the 3 week waiting period has elapsed, start the renovation process.



## Bring the Color Indoors

Our Houseplant Department is filled with easy-care flowering plants that will bring the brilliant colors of nature inside. Houseplants are an inexpensive way to add cheer and celebrate the changing seasons.

We suggest you select your plants with an idea of the location you want to decorate, making certain that their colors will harmonize with your existing color schemes. Groupings of three or more plants together will provide maximum impact.

Here are a few suggestions with seasonal colors in mind:

### Kalanchoe, *Kalanchoe*

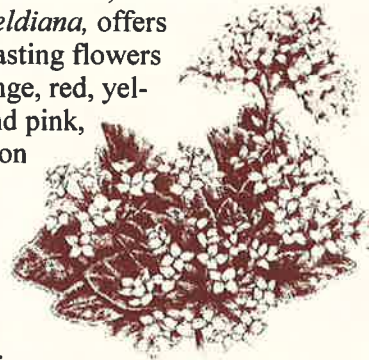
*blossfeldiana*, offers long-lasting flowers in orange, red, yellow and pink, borne on long stems above dark green leaves.

Mass them on a low table for a splash of color.

### Ornamental Pepper, *Cap*

*sicum annuum*, bears dozens of long lasting miniature peppers. Each pepper undergoes a slow color change — first green, then white, yellow, purple, and finally a brilliant, glossy red or orange. Since each fruit changes independently, you will enjoy a colorful, ever-changing centerpiece.

Blue flowered **African violets**, a Behnke specialty for over fifty years, grouped in a pot or basket and perched on a windowsill, can complete a striking tableau when viewed together with the brilliant yellow, orange and crimson leaves of deciduous trees framed in the window. ☺



# Drying Herbs in Frigid Air

— by Lori Hicks,  
Graphics Dept., Beltsville



When it comes to vegetable and herb gardening I'm a real procrastinator. But I've got plans, let me tell you, *big* plans. Tomato sauce, chutneys, herbal vinegars, spice blends, dill pickles... But truth be told, I usually end up giving away armfuls of fresh vegetables and neat little bundles of herbs — except for the giant zucchinis, of course, which no one wants. These I shred and store in large ziplock bags, each labeled with a post-it note (still sticks at 0°F!) and stacked neatly in the back of the freezer — which is where they stay until I throw them out to make room for the next year's crop of giant shredded zucchini. Anyway, the vegetables are gratefully accepted, but there are always more herbs than I can give away. It was always so disheartening to watch as the frost destroyed my herbs before I even had the chance to fashion them into picturesque bunches hanging from the rustic beams in my home. Never mind that my home has no rustic beams, it was still the *plan*. And in just a few weeks I would be wanting them for all the holiday cooking and baking I'd planned....

Happily, last summer I stumbled upon a method for preserving herbs that even *I* can find the time for: drying herbs in the refrigerator. The environment in modern frost-free refrigerators is ideal for this purpose — cool and dry. Any amount of heat will reduce the flavor and color retention of dried herbs, so fridge drying beats out other popular methods, such as microwave drying, oven drying, even the rustic beam method.

Here's how it's done. Harvest the herbs on a sunny day. For best results the

leaves must be free of any moisture, so wash them thoroughly the day before or very early on the day you plan to harvest. Pick the herbs (mid-morning is best), remove the leaves and discard the stems.

Simply place the freshly harvested herbs on a plate lined with a paper towel or cheesecloth (to insure air circulation) and put them in the refrigerator — three to five days is usually sufficient. The exact length of time will depend on the type and the quantity of herbs. I usually stir them gently once a day. They're done when they feel crispy. You can crumble them into a plastic container, label with a post-it note, and pop into the freezer (next to the zucchini). For short term use, the dried herbs can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature.

Because I love basil, I have rigged up a cheesecloth cradle in the door of my refrigerator. Every few days, usually when I harvest tomatoes, I pick a large handful of basil leaves and toss them into the cradle. I turn them over once a day or so. In about three days I crumble them into the jar in the freezer.

When the cold weather arrives, I have a line of small containers in the freezer filled with herbs that will enable me to perk up winter meals or create unique homemade gifts for my family and friends. For example, this Christmas I plan to give gifts of custom herb and spice blends, herbal vinegars and homemade chutneys. I'll package them in attractive jars which I'll discover at an antique store. I'll create charming homespun labels and ..... well, maybe I'll just slap a post-it note on a bag of giant shredded zucchini. We'll see. ☺

## Garden Recipes

### Spicy Zucchini Patties

*This is a quick and delicious way to use quantities of fresh zucchini.*

- 2 cups finely shredded zucchini
- 2 cups dried bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp. fajita or taco seasoning
- 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp. tomato juice
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Oil for frying

Toss the zucchini with the bread crumbs and seasoning. Combine the mayonnaise, juice and eggs in a separate bowl and then add to the zucchini mixture. Form loosely into patties (if mixture is too dry, add a little more tomato juice). Fry in oil over medium heat until well browned on both sides. Serve with sour cream, salsa, or Pico de Gallo (see below). *Serves six.*

### Pico de Gallo

*Recipe shared by Carl Behnke, certified chef and the grandson of the late Albert Behnke.*

- 1 tsp. fresh garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- 1 to 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and chopped
- Juice of one lime (~ 4 Tbsp.)
- 1 Tbsp. Balsamic vinegar
- 2½ Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
- 3 cups tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup cucumber, seeded and chopped
- ½ Tbsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

Blend the garlic, onion, jalapeño, lime juice, and vinegar in a stainless steel or plastic, non-reactive bowl. Warning: when working with hot peppers, it is best to wear disposable latex gloves — washing your hands will not necessarily remove the potent acids and touching your eyes or other tender spots afterwards can be extremely painful!

Add the cilantro, cucumbers, tomatoes, and seasonings. Stir gently and refrigerate for about an hour prior to use. *Serves six.* ☺

# The Bulb Who Came In From the Cold

— by Gertrude Greengloves, Special to The GardeNews

**W**ith a little planning, you can have a variety of ready-to-bloom pots of tulips, crocuses, daffodils and other spring bulbs to give as gifts for the holidays. Or you can bring them into bloom to brighten your own home during the darkest weeks of winter. This process is known as "forcing," and, if you begin in September, you might even have some blooms for Christmas.

**Choose.** Tulips, daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths, and many other bulbs will produce excellent results. Select varieties labeled "ideal for forcing." For each 6" pot allow 6 tulips, 4 - 6 daffodils, 3 hyacinths, or 12 - 16 crocuses.

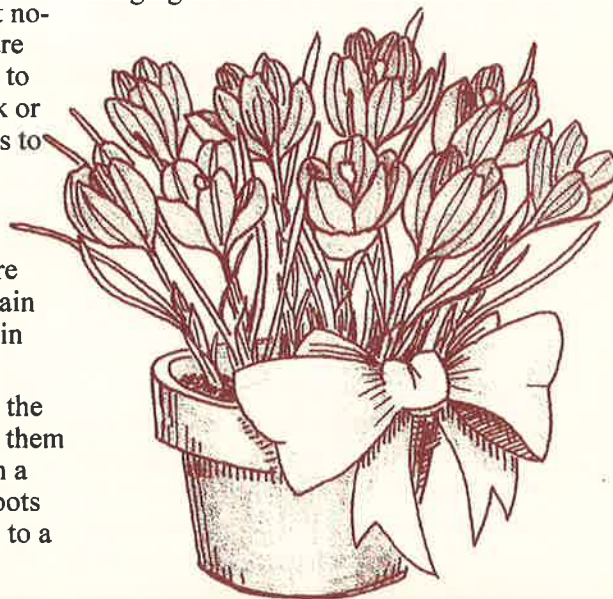
**Plant.** Clay pots are best. As they grow, potted bulbs can be quite top heavy. The weight of clay can prevent the pots from toppling over. Using potting soil, fill the pots partially and arrange the bulbs so that their tips are about half an inch below the rim. Fill in around the bulbs with more soil, taking care not to firm the soil too much, until the bulbs are just barely covered. (When arranging tulips, place the flat side of the bulbs facing the outer rim of the pot. This will result in a more uniform appearance as the tulips grow.) Water thoroughly and allow to drain.

**Chill.** Place the potted bulbs in a spot where they will be cold but protected from freezing. The ideal temperature range is 35° to 50°F. Some good choices are a cold frame, unheated garage or cellar, or even a refrigerator. In fact, if you want blooms for the holidays, a refrigerator is the only choice since temperatures outdoors can be above 50°F well into October, and you'll lose weeks of chilling time. You are simulating winter, which is necessary for bloom in the life cycle of spring-flowering bulbs. The chilling period must last about 12 weeks for most bulbs, and 15 weeks or more for tulips. During this time you won't notice much activity, but the bulbs are busy growing roots and preparing to bloom. Check the pots every week or two, and water when the soil starts to feel dry. During the last weeks of chill time, you may notice shoots growing through the soil, and you'll probably have to water more often. Never allow the soil to remain soggy, and always let the pots drain well after watering.

**Voila!** Now you're ready to bring the pots out of cold storage and place them in a cool spot, out of direct sun. In a week or two, or when the new shoots are 4 to 6 inches high, move them to a sunny window. If they don't get

enough sun the plants can become leggy and unattractive. At this point you are trying to simulate spring, so try to keep the temperatures as cool as possible — 60°F is ideal. Soon the buds will begin to swell, show color, and finally the plants will burst into bloom, some filling the room with fragrance. To prolong the blooming period you may want to move the pots of bulbs away from direct sun.

If you wish to make a gift of your forced bulbs while they are still in bud, wrap them in colored cellophane and attach a gift card with instructions for bringing them into bloom. ☺



## Inside: Fall Events

Do Not Forward or Return — Address Cor.

Beltsville, MD (301) 937-1100  
11300 Baltimore Ave. (U.S. Rte. 1) 20705  
Florist (301) 937-4032



BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Rockville, MD  
Permit No. 3539