



## Lael's Moon Garden Newsletter

### Fall Color, Planting and Watering

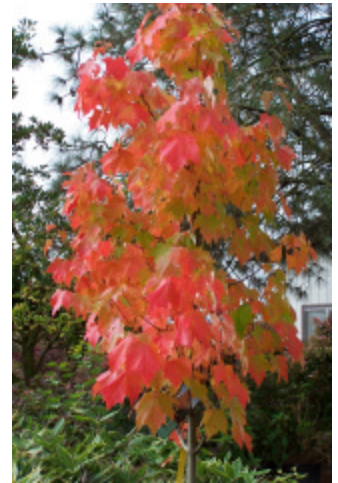
There are at least three signs in the natural world that tell us autumn is near. There's a decided chill in the morning air, green leaves are beginning to take on bright colors, and the Snuggies ads are getting closer together on television.

At Lael's Moon Garden we're looking forward to cooler days. About the end of September, we reduce the amount of water we give established plantings to help harden off succulent growth before the hard frosts come. Fall is the best time to plant trees, shrubs and perennials here because they do not have to face any hot, dry weather for seven or eight months. Although we still thoroughly water new plantings this time of year, Mother Nature will soon be handling any watering needs for months. (In the Chehalis River basin where we live she sometimes *overwaters*, but that's another story.) Although the tops of newly planted trees and shrubs are dormant in the winter, roots continue to grow. That's an important head start next spring.



Choosing fall color is best done in the fall as well. The variety of fall colors is breathtaking and difficult to describe. Some plants that color up well elsewhere may not be bright in soggy Washington. Others are positively brilliant here. By

choosing fall color plants now, what you see is what you get! Porcelain berries, Beauty berries, Viburnum Brandywine, hawthorns and Kousa dogwoods (pictured) are all showing great color with berries or fruits in abundance.



We still have a wide selection of fall color trees and shrubs. Not everything colors at the same time (so there's more to come) but take a look at some of the pictures taken at the nursery in the last few days! Better yet, come have a look. To see more photos with names of each plant click here:

<http://www.laelmoongarden.com/displaygardens/photogallery.html>

### Vegetables In Containers Trials

After a 10-year hiatus, we began vegetable gardening again this year. We kind of backed into it. At one of the spring garden shows, a passing customer left some broccoli and lettuce starts in our booth. After trying to reach them several times, we planted the plants. About the same time, Dr. Stephen Kern (our family dentist and

tomato grower extraordinaire) gave us four different varieties of heirloom tomato plants. From there, it just snowballed. Larry admits to having many faults, but moderation isn't one of them. He jumped in with both feet and we began trials of tomatoes and other vegetables to grow in containers. He had so much fun you can bet that next summer there will be more extensive tests. (We really need a place in the southern hemisphere so we can do this year around!)



Here's some of what we learned and re-learned thus far. Tomatoes grow very well in a black nursery container 14" wide and 17" tall with a tomato cage. The tall, narrow black container warms up quickly. We fertilized early in the season with light applications of NutraGreen soluble fertilizer and watered the pots nearly every day. (Containerized plants dry out quickly.) Tomatoes produced much better in pots than in our clay soil which warms more slowly. Of the tomatoes we tested, Early Girl and Sweet Million were the most productive -although few of the Sweet Millions made it out of the garden because Larry eats them like grapes! Patio Roma did well, but we want to try some of the other "roma" types before we choose which ones to love. The Patio Roma tomatoes were a little small.

Oregon Spring tomatoes ripened about a day earlier than Early Girl, but they're prone to cracking and were much less productive so we won't do those next year. Dr. Kern's heirloom tomatoes produced medium-to-huge, flavorful tomatoes, but they weren't labeled and we got them in later so it wasn't a fair test. We'll do more testing next year.

Lettuce, broccoli, zucchini, golden zucchini, acorn squash, butternut squash, leeks, corn and potatoes were planted in black nursery pots 22" wide by 12" deep. The corn was delicious but not nearly as productive as in the ground. We pronounced container growing of corn a loser. Broccoli and lettuce did very well in containers. Both kinds of zucchini were only slightly less productive in containers. If you've grown zucchini before, you know that's a *good* thing, so we'll continue with containers for those. Butternut and acorn squash were considerably less productive in containers, so we'll do those in the ground next year.

The potato plants are still growing at this writing, but we un-potted one to see how it was producing. Container growing of potatoes is clearly a winner (see photo.) Among other benefits, potatoes can be removed from containers without the damage that sometimes results from digging.



All of the above vegetable tests were grown in the Silver Springs compost that we sell in bulk. (The state certifies it as suitable for organic gardening.) Everything but potatoes was fertilized with NutraGreen and/or Alaska Fish Fertilizer. The potatoes were not fertilized because they resent too much nitrogen and it can harm their productivity. Based on the success of the container-grown leeks this year, we have started some garlic, shallots, and onions in containers to root over the winter for harvesting next summer.

We have previously grown fall-planted onion family plants in the ground and they do very well. The secret is continuous moisture and fertilizer next spring to get the bulbs as big as possible before the tops die down. That's when they're ready to harvest. Of course, onions can also be harvested for green onions. If you'd like to try winter grown onions, shallots or garlic, we still have sets available.



Container trials were also done of a few strawberry varieties this year. The jury is still out on the June-bearing strawberries because they shouldn't be allowed to bear the first year. The ever-bearing Tri-Star strawberry proved to be the best strawberry we have ever tested. It is a prolific producer of very flavorful, medium sized berries. The berries would have been larger if we'd cut off the suckers like we were told, but what fun would *that* be? Even some of the *suckers* grew good berries. Anyway we've already ordered a supply TriStar strawberries to offer to our customers in the spring. TriStar is a winner.

### Other Plant Notes

Trials are continuing on Encore azaleas. There are numerous varieties sold under this brand at premium prices. Because of their cost, we decided to test their performance before offering them for sale. So far they have not re-bloomed in the summer which is their claim to fame. Encore azaleas were developed in the south, so we were concerned about their winter hardiness. They got through this last rotten winter with minimal leaf damage, so hardiness is no longer a concern for us. However, they did not bloom profusely even in spring and there was no re-bloom or attempted re-bloom. We suspect they require more summer heat than we have in the Pacific NW to rebloom. We have



told each one of them that if they don't get impressive soon we'll throw their expensive little bodies on the burn pile!

Crepe Myrtles were great this summer. They don't bloom every summer, unless it's hot, but when they do they are really stunning. The trees also have great fall color, interesting structure and exfoliating bark.

## Fall bulb planting



There is still time to plant bulbs this fall. The light frosts tell the plants to prepare for cold weather and it will most likely mid to late November before we get a hard freeze. Bulbs can be planted as long as the ground is still workable. We have ornamental onions (Alliums) as well as edible ones, shallots and garlic all available at the nursery. Be sure to give them some fertilizer when planting to promote root growth.

## Mums the Word



Mums are a great fall plant to add a rainbow of colors. They bloom from late summer until a hard frost. They love full sun, good drainage and are great in containers. Our remaining mums are on special:

4" pots \$1.99 each or 3 for \$10.00

6" pots ( #1 gallon size) \$3.99 each or 3 for \$12.00

Reminder- Nursery Hours are:

Thursday through Sunday 10 AM to 6 PM through November 1.

Beginning the first week of November, we switch to our winter hours of:

Weekends only 10 AM to 5 PM.

Of course you are welcome to visit at other times, please call first so we can arrange to meet you.

Visit our web site to see more fall color photos with descriptions click here:

<http://www.laelsmoongarden.com/displaygardens/photogallery.html>

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