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Magazine

A wise
look at
garden
trends

Also inside: Pumpkin Painting Recipes



Natural elements, like these owls carved of stone, add personality to your garden. Rain gardens, like the intent of the plants shown below, take advantage of rainfall and stormwater runoff.

No stone left unturned

Story and photos by Michel Elben

Form, function stressed when selecting natural garden items

Today's garden is not just about form; it's also about function.

Fall's cool, moist weather is a great time to add color and wildlife habitat to your landscape with native plants.

Autumn is an ideal time to make changes in your garden.



The weather is pleasant and water needs are not as critical.

This month allows recently planted flora to become established before they begin to go dormant for the winter.

Environmental Concern's nursery in St. Michaels has several native sampler packs.

"They're ideal for gardeners who want to try a new look," said Leslie Hunter-Cario, nursery manager for Environmental Concern.

Native plants are versatile. Several native plants produce seeds, flowers and fruits in autumn that attract migratory birds and butterflies.

They can also bring interest and color to the garden, like the *Rudbeckia hirta*, or Black-eyed Susan.

The *Hibiscus moscheutos*, also known as rose mallow, is common in the coastal states.

Its roots can grow in water up to six inches high. Rose mallow is very showy and was also a popular plant at the Environmental Concern native sale.

"It's a favorite of the hummingbird," said Hunter-Cario.

Plants like the rose mallow can also be cultivated for soil erosion prevention.

Rain gardens, built like a shallow pond, use deep-rooted wildflowers and grasses to filter out pollutants before the water runs into a stream or river.

The garden holds water for less than a week.

Plants such as asters and goldenrod extend the garden into fall by adding bright pops of color and structural interest to the landscape.



Several local nurseries have rain barrels for sale for gardeners who want to save money by harvesting rainwater.

According to the staff of Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely, "one goldenrod worthy of mention is the cultivar Fireworks, which forms a dense colony that grows 3 to 4 feet tall with curved flowering tips reminiscent of Fourth of July fire-

works. It is deer-resistant and makes for excellent cut and dried flowers."

Gardeners have also started to use colorful lettuces and herbs along the borders of their gardens instead of the typical annuals.

Edible ornamentals, such as

blueberries, are also popular and often started in the container gardens that tomatoes used to dominate.

Blueberries can be grown in a 12-inch deep pot.

A "low bush" variety will become 2 to 4 feet tall with a 2- to 4-foot spread.

Growing blueberries in large pots is a preferred method because it is easy to amend the soil. Pots should be put in full sun and receive an inch of water a week.

Native trees such as sweet bay magnolia, river birch and black gum are also wise choices for fall planting.

In summer, the leaves of black gum or tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*, are an ordinary glossy green — but in

autumn, it produces vibrant shades of red and orange.

Another popular and useful native is the sweet gum tree.

Gardeners looking for an eventual shade tree with great fall color should consider this gem.

The leaves are deep, glossy green in summer and turn yellow to purple-red in the fall. It makes an excellent home for songbirds.

Natives can also provide natural decoration at its finest.

According to literature released by the Maryland Native Plant Society, "The sweet gum's fruit cluster is a round ball often persisting in winter, as if the naked branches had been hung with woody Christmas ornaments." ➤



Imperfections are allowed to remain in each stone owl to make each one perfectly unique.

Rockin' owls a big hit

In addition to the planting of native trees, shrubs, and perennials in autumn, gardeners are also using natural ornaments in their garden.

"The most unique items are made out of natural materials like stone and granite," said Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, president of Environmental Concern. The owl pictured on the front cover and above is made of boulder.

"Each owl has its own personality," said Pittenger-Slear. "Imperfections are left in each piece making them unique."

Natural ornaments can be a beautiful addition to any garden.

"They put the finishing touch on a landscaped area," Pittenger-Slear said. ➤



Environmental Concern's Penny Greeley discusses the benefits of planting natives with a customer during EC's nursery sale.