

Hot Weather Gardeners Plan Ahead for Fall Foliage

No Cold Weather? No Problem! Heat Up the Garden with these Fall Foliage Tips

LAWNDALE, CA Is it too early to plan for fall color? Not if you live where it's hot. Just because the typical "fall foliage" postcard features sugar maples flaming up and down a New England hillside doesn't mean gardeners in warmer climes have to sit autumn out. In the south and west, warm-weather plants provide hot looks once temperatures "cool" down to 60 or 70 degrees at night. The catch is that for a big fall display you have to plan ahead and plant the "bones" during the spring. Here's how to integrate the rich oranges, burgundys, browns, maroons, purples, and yellows of fall color into your landscape, starting with summer. In October, you'll be glad you got started now. Here's how.



Feature Foliage

Focal point foliage should always be the centerpiece of a long-lasting container garden. For a real "wow" factor at the entryway, start with [Tropicanna® canna](#) in the center or center back of a large (at least 18-24 inch diameter) container. Plants are hardy to zone 7 and produce masses of striped variegated leaves in shades of burgundy red, pink, yellow, gold, and deep green. When the sun shines through the leaves, they appear to glow—true show-stoppers. Tropicanna® cannas grow best in full sun and moderately moist to moist soil. Combine with other plants that require similar conditions.

Here's a hot tip: [Coprosma Pacific™ Sunset](#) has two-toned red and burgundy foliage that also glows in bright sun. Hardy to zone 9, it makes an outstanding container thriller or filler with four-season interest and deepening color as the temperatures drop. Its companion plant, Coprosma Pacific™ Sunrise, has equally lovely foliage (*below*).





Go Grassy

Ornamental grasses add movement in the garden—container or landscape—few other plants can provide. Authors of *Gardening with Foliage First*, Karen Chapman and Christina Salwitz, are big advocates of incorporating sedges into foliage combinations for color and texture. Weeping brown sedge, *Carex flagellifera* ‘Bronze’, one of their recommendations for a fall full sun combo, can handle moist soils and would be a great contrast to Tropicanna® in a container planting. Bonus? Weeping brown sedge looks great all summer, too.

Not a grass, but grasslike, **Festival™ Burgundy** cordyline and **Festival™ Raspberry** are also thrilling foliage plants for containers. Growing to 3 feet tall and Festival cordylines can be planted out in the landscape if they outgrows their containers.

Hardy in zones 8-11 and happiest in full sun to partial shade and moderately moist soil, these cordylines will add height and texture through multiple gardening seasons.

Integrate Annuals and Edibles

Maybe you don’t want to look at the same plants for six months. If you start with a base of fantastic foliage, you can add in annuals and edibles for seasonal interest, replacing them as they run their course. Summer annuals that make good companions for colorful foliage plants include amaranth, celosia, pentas, angelonia, melampodium, zinnias, torenia, and blue daze. In the fall, swap those out for petunias, violas, snapdragons, calendula, and chrysanthemums.



Brie Arthur, author of *The Foodscape Revolution: Finding a Better Way to Make Space for Food and Beauty in Your Garden* suggests tucking in eggplants, peppers, purple basil cultivars, and patio tomatoes among the ornamentals for summer harvests and experimenting with grains for later season interest. “Rice and sorghum are beautiful grains that hit their peak in late summer and early fall. They look just like ornamental grass, but with an added bonus—an edible harvest,” Arthur says. “Even if you don’t grow enough for cooking, they make great conversation pieces. And, who knows, getting a ‘taste’ of growing these edibles in small quantities might just make you want to grow more!” When the nights to begin cooling down, Arthur will swap out the summer veggies for mustard greens, kale, cabbage, and Swiss chard. “The edible cabbages and kales are just as pretty as the ornamental types.”

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