



Geranium

Spring fling of flowers

BY JENNIFER STREISAND

Spring and summer are the seasons for vacations, leisurely walks in the park, sitting

on the deck, and flowers — lots and lots of flowers. They remind us of renewal every year.

Our experience outdoors is always enhanced by the beauty of flowers. Each year, there are new varieties available for gardeners, along with classics we can enjoy again and again, such as the potted geranium, one of the staples at Bloomer's Greenhouse in West Point. Bloomer's sets up at Lafayette farmers markets as well. However, if you are looking for a variety of flowers, Dean Fallis, owner of Bloomer's, says the Saturday morning Farmers Market in downtown Lafayette is where you'll find the best selection from his greenhouse.

"We do patio geraniums; we sell big patio geraniums in 12-inch pots," he explains. Container plants have increased in popularity in recent years because they require less maintenance than planting flowers in the ground, and they can be controlled more easily. ➤➤





At Bennett's Greenhouse in Lafayette, the staff will help you create your own potted flowers to enjoy all season long, says Barb Ruff, plant manager at Bennett's. Staff at Bennett's can customize container plants for you, so that you have flowers with similar growing requirements in the same pot.

Another classic flower is the pansy, a cool weather flower that is planted in March and April and looks its best in May and early June. Ruff says a new variety of pansy designed to last the whole season is now available.

"It is called an Anytime pansiola, and the flower is a new Proven Winner. We should have some of them in the store." These pansies look similar to traditional pansies, but they will last into the hot weather, whereas traditional varieties often shrivel and die in the intense heat of July and August.

While pansies are annual flowers — they grow for just one season — there is a chance that they might hold over as a perennial flower does, depending on the conditions, explains Ruff.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dean Fallis, owner of Bloomer's Greenhouse in West Point, says geraniums are a popular flower with farmers market patrons. Here he holds a bouquet of daylilies.



Try these in your garden

2015 Flower of the Year: Coleus

Perennials

"With perennials, planters are working on breeding new flowers with longer blooming times, and they are starting to work on the hardiness of the perennials, too, so that they can better survive the harsher winters we have been having," explains Barb Ruff, plant manager, Bennett's Greenhouse.

Some varieties to try:

- » Echinacea or cone flower:
 - Double-Scoop Cranberry (a cone flower with a dark-red color)
- » Monarda or bee balm: Sugar Buzz, Cherry Pops, Lilac Lollipop, Grape Gumball
- » Heuchera or coral bell: Beyond the traditional pink flowers, look for a variety of new colors, such as green and purple
- » Shasta Daisy Whoops-A-Daisy (a new variety), a daisy with a more compact flower and a longer bloom time

Visit Bellinger's nursery and purchase a flowering tree by making an appointment: Call Jeff Freel, manager of Bellinger's Tree care at (765) 572-2241. Every fall, Bellinger's nursery holds its annual tree sale, this year to be held Oct. 16-18.

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Coleus



“As a tender perennial, they may live over, but you should not count on it,” she says. If we have a mild winter, or you had them in the perfect spot, it’s possible, but iffy.”

Annuals provide vibrant color all season long, as opposed to perennials, many of which flower for just a few weeks.

Fallis sells other classics in containers for summer convenience. “We do red, white and blue petunia baskets for the Fourth of July. These are all 12-inch container plants, designed not to be transplanted into the ground.”

Classics are familiar favorites, but sometimes it’s nice to set your eyes on something new, and growers are always creating new plants by crossing two different varieties, Ruff explains.

One such flower, the echibeckia, is a cross between an echinacea and a rudbeckia. “It is a daisy flower in several different colors — in oranges, yellows and reds,” she says.

The Flower of the Year for 2015 — the coleus —

may not be a household name, but it is a versatile plant and comes in many colors, says Ruff. She describes the coleus as having “great big leaves, and then little crinkly leaves. They are just a really good plant to put in a corner to brighten it up.” They generally come in oranges, reds and pinks.

If you’re looking for foliage, consider planting flowering trees, which are ornamental and produce flowers for about 10 days to two weeks, says Jeff Freel, arborist and manager at Bel-

linger’s Tree Care in Lafayette. Overall, a flowering tree requires less maintenance than perennial plants, and the visual results are similar, with some trees producing vibrant colors when in full bloom.

“For example, Sugartyme crabapple is a white flower, and Purple Prince crabapple is a bright, showy, fuchsia pink flower,” Freel says.

Toward the end of the growing season, some of these flowering trees also produce berries, which can be bright red and golden, and quite decorative, too, adds Freel. During the year, the crabapple tree, for example, will start with leaves, then flowers, and then fruit, year after year. While the crabapple tree is one that many people know, they are now available in new forms.

“A lot of people have a bad opinion about the crabapple, and they think it will make a mess of the ground, but with modern

crabapples, the fruit is the size of a pea, and the tree retains them well into the early winter,” he says.

Bellinger’s carries several types of traditional flowering trees, and they are small (5 feet to 6 feet tall) but sturdy

when they leave the nursery: Sugartyme

crabapple, Purple Prince crabapple, redbud, Ivory Silk tree lilac, Autumn Brilliance serviceberry and the classic dogwood tree.

They can be planted in the spring or the fall, and characteristic of most trees, they will be here for several generations to enjoy.



White dogwood



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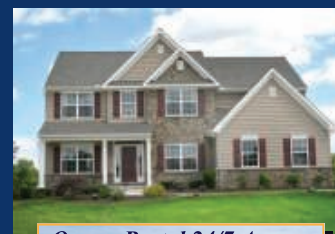
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