

GARDEN PARTY

# October has opportunities to savor and plan for later



BY SALLY D. KETCHUM  
Local columnist

*"There is no season when such pleasant and sunny spots may be lighted on, and produce so pleasant an effect on the feelings, as now in October."*

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, *American Note-Books*

**What's new?**

Pretty garden trugs, baskets (wooden or woven) and bags that will do double duty this winter as centerpieces. Fill these with autumn vegetables, dried herbs and, later, holiday ornaments. You'll love to use the containers in the garden next spring. Garden gloves: Ultra thin nylon knit gloves that are tougher than rubber but feel like skin. Faux cast iron door mats in classic, open patterns that are thick enough to clean muddy shoes more efficiently than standard mats and add style to entrances.

**Herb of the month**  
*Cilantro/Coriander*  
Cilantro is herb of the month because it is very popular year-round, and it is also available at markets year round.

However, the herb deserves special attention since it is also the object of much uncertainty. The confusion results because when cilantro is mature it is called coriander, and coriander is especially useful in autumn cooking. It enlivens the taste of many soups, and is basic to many ethnic recipes. The mature fruits (incorrectly, but usually, called seeds) are used in many pickling recipes.

Coriander's aroma of sage and citrus makes it popular in baked goods. In autumn, think of mulled wine—spiced with coriander!

To add to the confusion, the leaves of the young cilantro plant, are also called Chinese Parsley. It's interesting that although

Americans knew of this herb long ago, they thought it smelly and odd, and it was not popular until America discovered Mexican cuisine a several decades ago.

Now cilantro is side by side with parsley in most produce sections. It keeps about two weeks in a glass of water in the fridge.

**Old timer's garden lore**

If October is warm, February will be cold. If there is a full moon in October with no frost, there will be no frost until the first full moon in November. A profusion of furry caterpillars means a rough winter.

When leaves fall early, fall and winter will be mild. When leaves fall later, winter will be severe. Frantic squirrels predict snowfall. A rainy October means a windy December.

**Reading on the garden bench**

If you have 2005 seed catalogs, you might want read them again to order your very favorites now for 2006. Or, check on line if the variety you like best will be offered again. Further, the major seed companies are offering specials in October that mean large savings.

**Shorts season**

Our short season means a long, late spring. But happily this means that we can plant spring bulbs well into autumn — until the ground is frozen. The price of bulbs is low at marts, and bulk buying is even less expensive.

Also, local nurseries have wide and surprising offers, not only in flower colors, but also in blooming types and in spectacular blossom forms.

Before you place the bulbs in the earth, sprinkle in a tablespoon or so of bone

meal in the hole, and then plant. Surprisingly, you can plant bulbs on top of one another, and they will do just fine. Put the deepest bulbs in first developing into an artful planting and work to the tiniest.

Sally Ketchum writes and gardens in rural northern Michigan. This month she will scout garden centers for October-through-April supplies on sale. The first seeds that go into flats this month are for plants both flowers (begonias) and vegetables (shallots and leeks) that need a long time to develop into manageable seedlings.

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Sally Ketchum also writes a monthly column in *Outlook*, a Record-Eagle publication for people ages 50 and over. Check out November *Outlook* on Saturday, Oct. 29



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