

# Garden Party: Thoughts for a new season

*"Pray for peace and grace and spiritual food, For wisdom and guidance, for all these are good, But don't forget potatoes."*  
—John Tyler Pettee, "Prayer and Potatoes"

## What's new?

Soft-grip pruners. Since the grip is soft but resilient, these will accommodate both small and large hands. The new pruners have another important advantage. Some come with coated blades that makes pruning a snap (Forgive the garden pun).

## Herb of the Month: Lavender

And also other flowers and herbs that dry well for wreaths, décor accents and gifts. While the dried rose buds, strawflowers and hydrangeas are beautiful main attractions, remember to dry or buy fill materials like Baby's Breath, Sweet Annie and other plants that are delicate sprays to supplement the stars in arrangements and projects. Sages dry well and have a scent that is welcome to autumn rooms. If crafting is not your interest, look for these autumnal items in gift and craft stores. It's also easy to tie a small sprig of dried flowers or leaves in the bow of a wrapped gift.

## Celebrate!

Give back-to-school a little personal recognition. Renew a library card. Buy a sectioned notebook; divide the sections to your liking, e. g. New garden ideas, garden reading to do, 2005 garden notes, relevant stores and catalogs, and more.

National Farm Animal Week begins Sept. 18. Contemplate the other aspect of American farming besides agriculture. Kudos to experts and workers in

animal husbandry besides the grain and vegetable growers. Further, look for labels coming on meat that mark it as humanely raised animals.

## Old Timer's Garden Lore

"Let 'em stay in the ground," says the Old Timer, "Rutabagas and Brussels sprouts taste even better after weathering a frost."

It is usually true that members of the cabbage family, beets, peas, chard and onions can tolerate a mild frost.

## Reading on the garden bench

"Gardening Though the Year: A Step-by-Step Guide to Seasonal Gardening" by Peter McHoy. This book is useful for all gardeners, but a must for Anglophiles since it is an English book and fun to read because of the British slant! The full color photos are lovely; the 12 chapters are sensible and well organized. Each starts with a list of seasonal jobs for the garden. Its clear directions for pruning are helpful, and the book covers care of kitchen and flower gardens, greenhouses and — so English — conservatories. Orange Rooms, anyone?

## Short Season

Think about Michigan's season on paper. Write down, "Extend the garden." Circle the phrase. Now think of a way to do it, for instance, "Dry flowers and herbs." Write that down, and connect the two circles with a line. Another thought, "Snip cuttings to root." Circle and connect to "Extend the garden." Relaxing and brainstorming, clustering ideas like this allows you to connect any circle to any other one,

"Snip cuttings to root," for instance, to basil and to "German Ivy." Anything goes in brainstorming techniques because you can always edit out bad or unworkable ideas. Some ploys to consider for short season gardening. Mulch a patch with five to six inches of newspapers over the winter (Weight against wind). You'll have lovely friable soil next April or inspect garden tools for repair or replacement. Now is the time to note what performed well this year and what did not.

Be grateful for Michigan's marvelous change of seasons. As writer Hal Borland put it, "Summer ends, and autumn comes, and he who would have it otherwise would have high tide always and a full moon every night." — Sept. 13, "Sundial of the Seasons."

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BY SALLY D. KETCHUM  
Local columnist

Read Sally Ketchum's Kaleidoscope column in October *Outlook*, on newsstands Sept. 24

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### GARDEN TIP

#### Thumbs up for these products

Here are four new gardening products that won 2005 MGA Green Thumb Awards based on their uniqueness, technological innovation, ability to solve a gardening problem or provide a gardening opportunity, and potential appeal to gardeners.

- The Seed Stick Planter** is a device that enables a gardener to plant seeds while standing up. It sells for \$65 exclusively from Johnny's Selected Seeds, (877) 564-6697 (JOHNNYS), [www.johnnyseeds.com](http://www.johnnyseeds.com).
- The Petunia Dolce Flambe** is a multiflora-type petunia with masses and masses of flowers right up into autumn in mild climates. Dolce Flambe is available from Park Seed Co., (800) 845-3369, [www.parkseed.com](http://www.parkseed.com).
- The Watering Weed Mat** combines a polypropylene mat with a soaker hose. It sells for \$69.95. Available from Gardener's Supply, (800) 955-3370, [www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com).
- The Rumbo Winter Squash** is a pumpkin that tastes like a winter squash (or a winter squash that looks like a pumpkin). A packet of 25 seeds sells for \$2.75 from J.W. Jung Seed Co., (800) 247-5864, [www.jungseed.com](http://www.jungseed.com).

Copley News Service / Pete Chenari

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