

MINNESOTA'S ONLY HOMEGROWN GARDENING MAGAZINE

Northern Gardener

Grow

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FIVE WAYS TO GARDEN SUSTAINABLY





Feeling^{with} Foliage

To add texture to
your garden all season,
think leaves.

Story and photos by Michelle Mero Riedel

Once you understand how texture works in the garden, it's easy to design an appealing space using contrasting and complementary textures. Texture is created largely with leaves, and combining foliage textures gives a landscape visual excitement.

Foliage offers many textures—more than flowers—and pairing opposites is a good way to add interest and drama to your design. Fine or soft, bold or coarse, smooth or fuzzy, glossy or dull, large or small, bright or soft color—the combinations are endless. For example, take the sizeable leaves of tropical elephant ears and pair them with the delicate shape of a feathery grass. Or combine the fragile leaves of a fern with a chunky, corrugated hosta. The secret is balancing these foliage texture opposites throughout the garden, creating strong contrasts. Throughout the design process, remem-

ber that leaves can be more interesting than flowers.

Fortunately, there are countless leaf choices for each season. Here are 24 plants with great texture to bring feeling to your garden from spring to fall.

Spring into the Season

Spring is a time of astonishing renewal. Besides deciduous shrubs, there isn't much going on in the landscape on the first day of spring here in the Midwest. You can bring spring to life by planting a lot of bulbs. Their out-of-the-ground, oblong or pointed leaves provide excellent texture at the start of the season when everything else is hibernating. Early perennials such as lungworts, bleeding hearts and astilbes announce their rebirth by producing early, interesting foliage form and color. And as soon as

our last average frost day hits, I plant annuals to add additional texture with my perennials and shrubs.

***Brunnera macrophylla* 'Alexander's Great' PP25,789 (perennial)**

This is a beautiful, short springtime flowering plant for the shade. It has large, heart-shaped, shimmery silver leaves adorned with green veins. The early flowers are similar to forget-me-nots, but its foliage stands out, spring through fall.

***Bergenia crassifolia* 'Redstart' (perennial)**

This is another spring bloomer, but its thick, wide, glossy, wavy leaves are the focal point in my sunny garden border. This is my favorite bergenia, also called pigsqueak, because of its compact habit. Bergenia can tolerate part sun. »





***Euphorbia x martinii* 'Ascot Rainbow'**
PP21,401 (annual/perennial)

An excellent, dwarf evergreen shrub for USDA Zone 5 but if you live in a colder zone, it's a beautiful choice to enhance any sunny container garden. The plant's thin variegated foliage of yellow and lime green will blend nicely with brightly colored plants.

***Athyrium niponicum* 'Red Beauty'**
(perennial)

This plant is a favorite of mine, and it's a cousin to Japanese painted fern. This version boasts burgundy-red veins and stems that contrast nicely with the lacy, greenish-gray foliage. Remember to plant in light shade and fairly moist soil.

***Pulmonaria* 'Silver Shimmers'**
PP13,290 (perennial)

This plant has a mounded form for the part-shade garden border, and it features long, strappy, silver leaves. It has more silver, summer-long leaf color than most lungworts, as well as larger spring-blooming flowers than most.

***Acalypha wilkesiana* 'Kilauea'**
(annual)

This is a sunny, tropical, dwarf plant with spindlelike leaves of pink, red and green. It maintains its spectacular beauty from spring through fall. It has a wonderful texture that combines beautifully with coarse-shaped leaves or large, contrasting flowers.

***Picea glauca* 'Echiniformis' (shrub)**

This is a slow-growing and miniature plant, only growing 1 inch per year. This dwarf white spruce has soft but spiky needles. It's bluish green in color and goes by the name "hedgehog," because of its form.

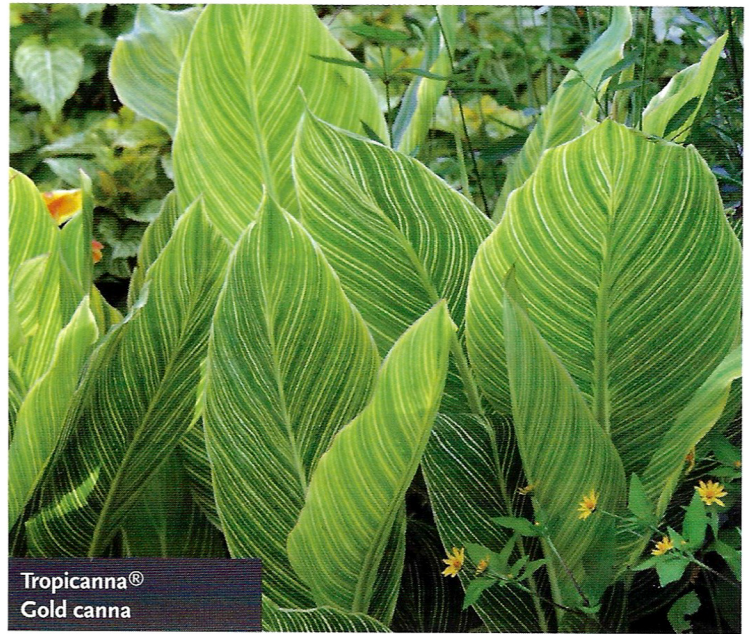
***Ajuga reptans* 'Black Scallop'**
PP15,815 (perennial)

This is a desirable low-growing carpet plant in the garden as well as a fantastic trailer in pots. It's prized for its midnight color and round, glossy, showy texture. I have it planted in masses in several areas of my garden, and the compliments I receive are endless.





Ajuga reptans
'Black Scallop'



Tropicanna®
Gold canna

SUMMER SHIMMERS

The peak of heat and sunshine are perfect for thriving, textured landscape plants. Here's where the bold foliage of tropical plants, such as canna lilies and elephant ears, shine in the garden. Hostas are at their peak height with looming flower stalks that create upright contrast, and the warm-season grasses are stunners. Summertime hosts the showy coralbells and calla lilies, which brighten up the shady areas of the garden. It's no wonder we want summer to last and last.

Tropicanna® Gold canna (annual bulb)

This plant's big, bold leaves thrive through autumn, with bright, tropical hues of

green-and-gold stripes. At a final height of 4 to 6 feet, this plant is a perfect fit for the back of a sunny garden border.

Heart to Heart™ caladium (annual bulb)

This fancy tropical plant has large, heart-shaped and oh-so-colorful foliage. You could say it has a December theme of red outlined in green. This plant and others in the Heart to Heart series can handle more sun than the usual caladium.

Colocasia esculenta 'Jack's Giant' (annual bulb)

This plant is named after "Jack and the Beanstalk." At a dramatic leaf length of 3 feet with heart-shaped foliage, this el-

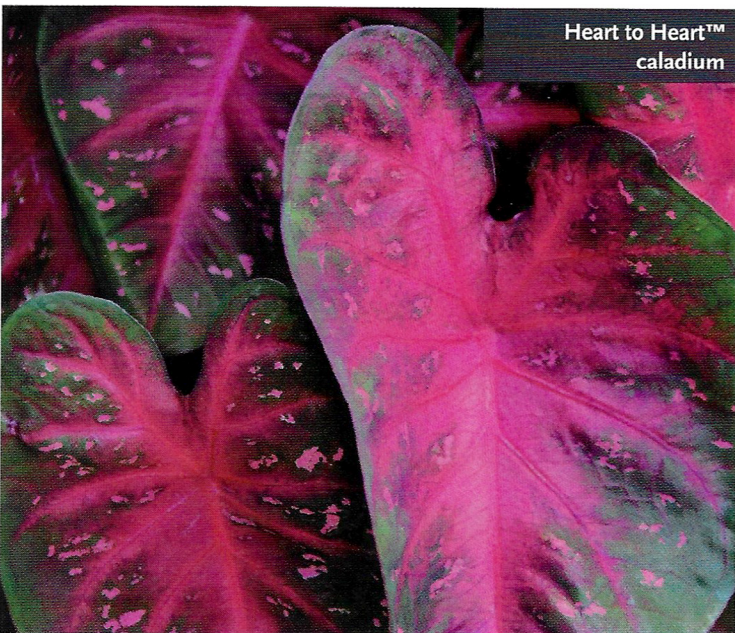
ephant ear will bring giant joy to a shade container garden or landscape.

Ginkgo biloba 'Slovakian Princess' (tree)

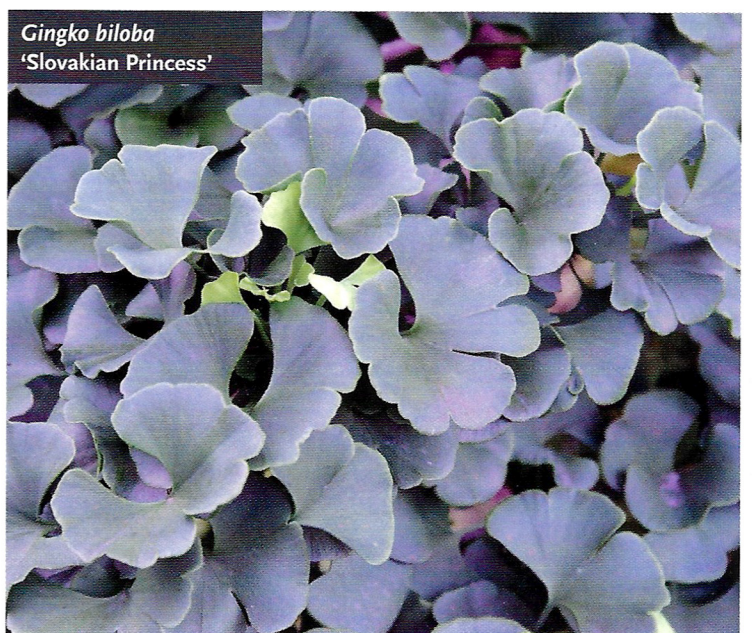
This is a short-in-stature, slow-growing tree that's perfect for a small, sunny garden. The leaves attract the most attention; they're bluish green in summer while turning yellow in the fall, dense and fan-shaped.

Heuchera 'Zipper' (perennial)

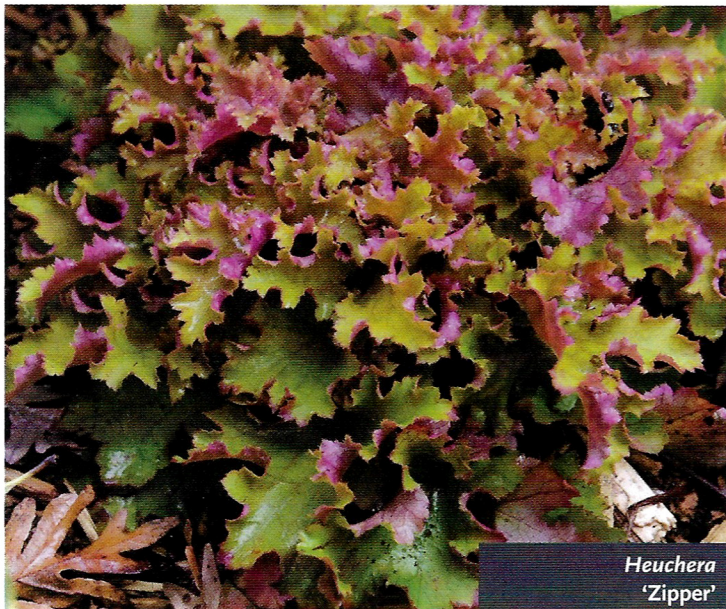
A mound of fall color and heavily ruffled foliage describes this fancy coralbell for the shade. The plant's magenta back combines well with the attention-getting gold top. The glossy leaves change color depending on the season. >>>



Heart to Heart™
caladium



Ginkgo biloba
'Slovakian Princess'



Hosta 'Big Daddy' (perennial)

This is a favorite of mine, and it's best known for its blue, puckered, chunky leaves. It's large in size and upright in habit. Because of its leaf thickness, it's more slug-resistant than other hostas.

Acer palmatum dissectum 'Nigrum' (shrub or tree)

This lace-leaf Japanese maple tree exhibits its dramatic foliage all summer, turning to a deep burgundy in the fall. It's often container planted for zones 4 or less, and it needs winter protection.

Strobilanthes dyerianus (annual)

This tropical plant's common name is Persian shield, and it grows fast with an

iridescent silver sheen over purple leaves outlined in green. For brighter foliage, plant this one in the shade or part shade.

FABULOUS FALL PLANTS

Who doesn't like fall's ultimate end-of-season color celebration? Not only is the garden foliage turning color, but trees and shrubs reign with their stunning hues. It's all about the graceful, cool-season, airy grasses at their spectacular showiness blowing in the late-season breezes. And kales, especially my favorite 'Peacock Red', pick up the last of their remarkable, florescent color in October. It's the warm colors that form during the chilly nights producing gold, apricot and burgundy everywhere in the landscape, while saying

goodbye to the growing season.

Salvia argentea (annual/perennial)

This plant has the softest and furriest leaves of any plant around. Its dramatic silver leaf displays beautifully in both gardens and containers. Commonly called silver sage, this is a zone 5 perennial that comes back if the winter is lenient.

Ginger Wine® ninebark (shrub)

The deep burgundy color is phenomenal on this deciduous, showy ninebark. It grows slowly and is easy to grow, with unusual peeling bark. In the sunny spring garden, 'Ginger Wine' emerges an orange-red color.

