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December 2018 NO. 184

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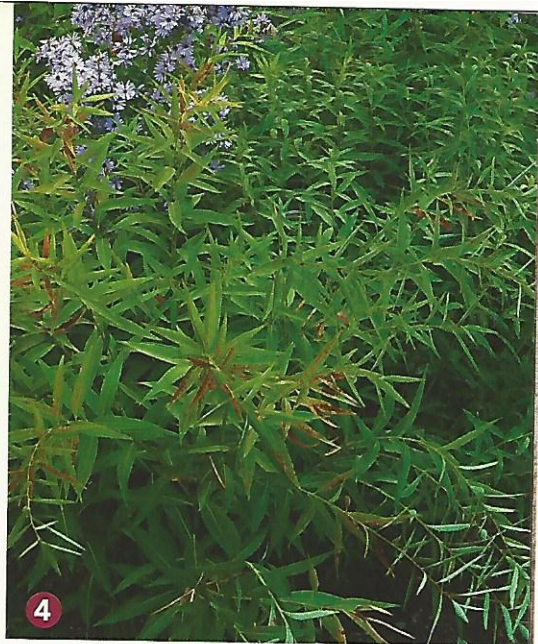


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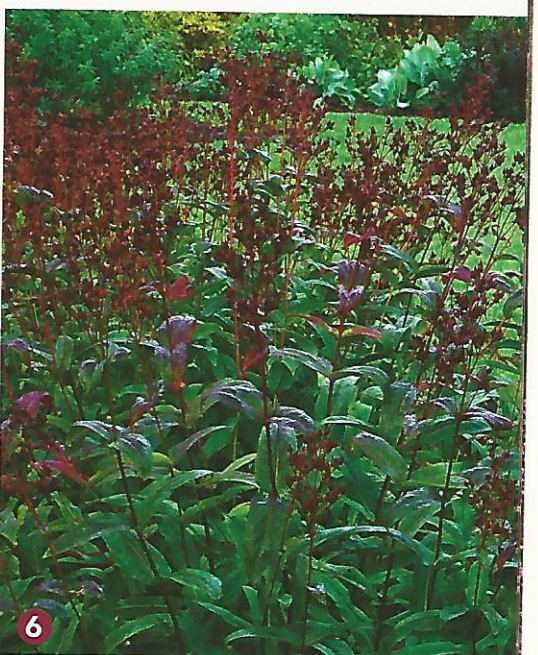
'Dark Towers' penstemon

(*Penstemon* 'Dark Towers', Zones 3–8) This dark-leaved plant produces a bounty of attractive burgundy seed pods after its early summer flowers fade. It looks equally nice either cut back to expose the rosette of burgundy foliage or with seed spikes left on for a taller show. Cutting the seed stalks off in late autumn helps the basal foliage toughen up for the winter; it also prevents unwanted seedlings.



'Concord Grape' spiderwort

(*Tradescantia* 'Concord Grape', Zones 3–9) Unless the weather is wet, 'Concord Grape' needs supplemental water to get through the heat of summer. Cut stems to the ground in midsummer after flowering starts to slack off, leaving any new foliage emerging at ground level. Fresh foliage will start to grow soon after.



'Arizona Apricot' blanket flower

(*Gaillardia* 'Arizona Apricot', Zones 4–9) This little powerhouse blooms all season long, provided it has excellent drainage and loose soil, not clay. If it is deadheaded as the flowers fade, it can bloom from early summer through late autumn.



'Bluebird' smooth blue aster

(*Symphyotrichum laeve* 'Bluebird', Zones 4–8) This pollinator-pleaser (photo p. 65) is a Mt. Cuba Center introduction. It shouldn't be pruned or shaped, because its habit is different from many asters; it produces flower spikes that emerge from basal foliage. Give it plenty of room, and enjoy the show!

'October Skies' aromatic aster

(*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* 'October Skies', Zones 3–8) The shorter of the two asters grown in the South Garden, 'October Skies' (photo p. 65) only grows about 2 feet tall. It may be cut back by about half in June to make it fuller. In fact, most North American asters (*Symphyotrichum* spp. and cvs., Zones 3–8) may be pruned or shaped before July 4 without reducing their bloom.