

Argus Observer

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Gardens with color combos and foliage factor

(ARA)—Lawns and gardens that are eye-catching have harmonious colorful plants in bloom and dramatic foliage varieties patterned in a way that appeals to the senses.

Unifying blooming and foliage plants in gardens has become a popular trend because it allows homeowners to think outside the box of traditional flower beds. If planted with care, a garden space can result in a heightened presence of sight, smell, movement and even touch. However, starting from scratch without proper knowledge can be tricky. From bold plant selection contrasts to color continuity, understanding bloom and foliage combinations will lead to an alluring escape in any back yard.

AMBIANCE MATTERS

Foliage plants bring as much interest to the garden and provide as many options as blooming plants. However, these combinations often exist in the form of variegated textures and nontraditional color contrasts. It is important to keep in mind the differences between a flower bed and foliage design. Foliage is all about leaf shape, vein coloration, outlines and textures. Some foliage selections are tall, dra-

matic and vast; others are soft, petite and simple. Arrangements are often subtle and focus on creating a mood, drawing the eye outward or upward and creating dimension.

Because common foliage colors include variations of blues, silvers, greens and deep reds, a soothing design concept is often a favorite among homeowners. To achieve this delicate ambiance, it is best to use strong textural contrasts to insight supplemental interest instead of bright colors alone. A mix of matte and velvet-like foliage may be best for this style, with groupings of smooth and serrated edges. The blue-green summer leaves of Heucherella "Tapestry" are accented with deep red veins which complement dark foliage plants such as the deep purple of Heuchera "Plum Royale." These two plants from Terra Nova Nurseries, a world leader in plant breeding and genetics in Portland, Ore., work well together to infuse drama and fullness to beds or containers.

Introducing soft hues blended with striking color contrasts adds range and seems to extend the space. Plant colors such as silver,

FACTOR: Choosing bright colors produces a vibrant energy

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auburn, russet and deep green will also add a calming effect and develop a sense of assortment without over-complicating the layout of the garden.

By choosing colors such as yellow, chartreuse, bright reds and greens, a foliage garden will take on a more vibrant energy. While vivid hues were once less common in foliage plants, many are now cultivated with high-level color power to tackle the need. When trying to make an impact, pair several bright- and true-green foliage varieties of different textures in an area with one or two unusual foliage colors. Complementing a heavy green palette with plants of crimson or wine will become an instant focal point. For example, the shiny, lacy leaves of Tiarella "Sugar and Spice," from Terra Nova Nurseries, have heavily marked reddish centers in summer. When used

with Tiarella "Mystic Mist," showcasing bright green leaves with white-speckled variegation and red veins, the combo is breath-taking.

Two other garden-worthy options from the growers of Garden Splendor varieties include Sedum "Angelina" with evergreen needle-like, yellow foliage that makes a stunning ground cover or container plant and Sorbaria "Sem" boasting a spectacular chartreuse leaf accented with softer bronze-red young tips that turn green in summer.

COLOR CONGEALS

When planning the colors for a landscape, especially spring or summer gardens, it is wise to think in terms of diversity. When placed together, flowering blooms in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes creates a medley with enticing appearance. Professional growers like Terra Nova Nurseries and Garden Splendor make great strides each year to culti-

vate a wide range of colorful bloomers. Planting unexpected combinations like Terra Nova Nurseries' Echinacea "Pink Poodle" and Echinacea "Mac 'n' Cheese" will stop garden visitors in their tracks with a bold and beautiful surprise. The names alone are enough to draw attention.

The alternating-stripe blooms of Phlox "Peppermint Twist" are a stunning choice for beds, borders and mass plantings. True to its name, pink and white blooms appear as if peppermint candy atop this compact grower. The Garden Splendor brand horticulturists say it is a mainstay of summer garden color.

Following the home-gardener trend of developing a collection or menagerie of color in the landscape, the Terra Nova Nurseries team introduced Echinacea "Tomato Soup," a coneflower with tomato-red blooms that can grow up to 3 feet tall. It follows

Echinacea "Tiki Torch," now well known for its broad florets and burnished-copper seed cones.

When creating beds, borders, containers and other gardens, blooming color and attractive foliage will unify the areas by their sheer visual appeal.

Learn more about these plants and gardening tips at www.terravanurseries.com and www.gardensplendor.com.