October 2009—*Oklahoma Gardening* Shows

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Please contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Office for more educational information on garden-related topics. If you need further information about this week's show, call (405) 744-5404 or visit our website http://www.oklahomagardening.okstate.edu. Thank you for your continued support!

Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3617)
OETA air date: October 24 and 25, 2009
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

Blades and Plumes – Grasses are incredibly diverse in size and form and there is certainly a grass for every location in the landscape. The grasses we will look at today vary considerably in the functions they perform in the garden. Starting with our lowest-growing grass, Variegated St. Augustine Grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) makes a wonderful groundcover. Its deeply variegated blades brighten up the shady areas of a landscape. You will often find the Variegated St. Augustine Grass listed as requiring full sun, however, as you can see, it also thrives in full shade. The grass is not hardy, so it is grown as an annual, but it grows vigorously and quickly covers an area. Another use for Variegated St. Augustine Grass is as a trailing plant in a hanging basket or container.

There are a number of native grasses in our blades and plumes garden. Native grasses make great additions to the garden as they are well adapted to local conditions. Many of these grasses do not like to be pampered. Heavy watering and fertilization tend to promote excessive vegetative growth, causing the grasses to grow very tall and flop over. With native grasses, we need to abuse the plants a little, hold back on water and fertilizer.

Most of us associate grasses with the open, sunny prairie, but there are also grasses adapted to shaded habitats. This grass is Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) sometimes called Inland Sea Oats. It produces a dense stand even in heavy shade, reaching three to four feet in height and spreading about two feet. The grass produces lovely seed heads in the summer that look like fish on a line, these ripen in to a lovely gold in the fall and are widely used in dried arrangements. The plant seeds readily and can spread easily. In a large garden that may be desirable, if you are wishing to cover a large area. But if you want to keep the grass more contained, you will want to clip the seed heads. We enjoy the green seed heads throughout the summer, but once they start to dry and turn brown in late summer, we cut them off. This prevents the seed from dropping and new grasses from sprouting up next season.

We also have Lindheimer's Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*), which is not as showy in the fall as its pink cousin, Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia caprillaris*), but just as graceful. This species sports delightful blue foliage, which grows in a dense clump two feet by two feet. In fall, it sends up flower spikes well above the foliage, often reaching up to five feet. The flowers start out purplish in color, then fade to gray and hold well into the winter. Native to Texas and northern Mexico, muhly is hardy to zone 7 and is very tolerant of heat and drought. Hardy Pampas Grass or Ravenna Grass is among the largest of our ornamental grasses. It is a not a true pampas grass, rather belongs to a different species, *Erianthus ravennae*. Ravenna

Grass is hardy to zone 6. It also sports lofty silver white to beige plumes that reach lengths between one and two feet. The flower heads are produced in fall and last into winter. They are used in fresh and dried arrangements. Ravenna Grass can spread by seed and become a bit weedy. It is best to cut flower heads before they drop seed.

Foerster's Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*) is the favored grass of many gardeners. It has an incredible vertical form and unique, unfailing blooms from summer through winter. The foliage grows in a tight clump, three feet tall by two feet wide, with rich green, erect, slightly arching blades. The flowers are the true show stopper of feather reed grass. They start to appear in June on stalks reaching four to six feet. The feathery plumes turn a golden brown in summer and hold tight into winter. The seeds are sterile, so you will not find seedlings popping up all over the garden. The flower stems have a strong, vertical stature, which set the plant apart from its surroundings, especially when paired with more rounded perennials.

Rain Gardening – In this segment we visit with professors Helen Kraus and Anne Spafford of North Carolina State University to learn about rain gardens and storm water management applications for the home landscape. Rain gardens help scrub pollution from rainwater that moves through the landscape, preventing those pollutants from entering public waterways and municipal supplies. Rainwater runoff contains metals from roof shingles, oil, grease and other fluids from automobiles that wash off driveways and roads. Phosphorous from detergents, fertilizers and pet wastes are also removed through rain gardens, as is nitrogen from similar sources. Interestingly, one of the largest sources of excess nitrogen in our water supplies comes from grass clippings and mulch washed out of landscapes.

Rain gardens should be placed in a location that maximizes the amount of rainwater intercepted as it moves through the landscape. General guidelines involve placing the rain garden no less than 10 feet from the foundation of a building, at least 25 feet from a septic system, and at least 50 feet from a well. The rain garden should not be placed at the bottom of a slope, but rather at the midpoint of the slope. As rain gardens can be beautiful additions to the landscape, you will also want to consider views of the garden when placing. The rain garden should be large enough to capture at least the first inch of rainfall, which typically contains the majority of pollutants. More information on sizing and locating the rain garden can be found at OSU's Low Impact development website: http://lid.okstate.edu/sustainable-homes-gardens-series.

A rain garden is composed of six basic components:

1. A depressed area set 3 to 6 inches lower than its surroundings
2. An amended soil filter bed
3. Mulch
4. A berm on the lower (downhill) edge
5. Plants
6. Rock or other material to slow water flow

To install a rain garden begin by selecting the location and laying out a garden hose to determine shape. The shape can be adjusted to fit the landscape, linear in a formal garden, curved in a more natural setting. Dig an appropriately sized hole to a depth of 1 to 4 feet (call OKIE before you dig!). Stockpile soil for later use. Berm up the lower (downhill) side of the garden using soil removed from the hole. The downhill edge should be raised to a height level with the uphill edge. Create an overflow outlet that allows water from large storm events to exit the garden in a

non-erosive manner. Stone weirs, level spreaders, and large diameter pipe can be used as overflow outlets.
The bottom of gardens should be tilled deeply and leveled to improve infiltration. Amend the soil in the hole mixing topsoil and 3 to 4 inches of compost into every foot of native soil. Compost should be stable (well aged) and low in nitrogen and phosphorus. Composted pine bark is well suited for this purpose.

Plant and mulch the garden with 2 to 4 inches of shredded hardwood bark (avoid pine bark - it floats). Plants for a rain garden must tolerate both flood and drought conditions. It is also important to consider aesthetics when selecting plants, rain gardens are gardens after all. Plants with a dense base will trap and hold water better. Visit http://lid.okstate.edu for a list of suggested plants.

J.C. Raulston Arboretum – The J.C. Raulston Arboretum is a nationally acclaimed garden with the most diverse collection of cold hardy temperate zone plants in the southeastern United States. As a part of the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, the Arboretum is primarily a working research and teaching garden that focuses on the evaluation, selection and display of plant material gathered from around the world. Diverse plant collections are the foundation of J.C. Raulston Arboretum.

With growing concerns over water resources, the arboretum strives to demonstrate a variety of garden practices, plant materials, and water management strategies in its display gardens. Two demonstrations areas demonstrating water-wise gardening are the Xeric and Scree Gardens. The xeric garden represents what we most commonly associate with the idea of low-water plantings and is filled with a wide range of flowering and succulent drought tolerant plants. Xeric plantings include cacti and other succulent plants, such as the magnificent 'Crazy Horse' Pulque Agave (*Agave salmiana* 'Crazy Horse'). But a number of flowering plants are also quite drought tolerant and brighten up the xeric landscape. These include favorites such as Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*). One cultivar is called 'Lipstick' for its magnificent deep red blooms. Many grasses also fit the xeric garden, such as the brilliant 'Pink Flamingos' hybrid Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia* hybrid 'Pink Flamingos).

The Scree Garden is another type of xeric landscape that features a diversity of plants from dry habitats around the world including Australia, South Africa, Mexico, the Mediterranean and the southwestern United States. The scree is installed in beds with specially prepared soil mixed with a heat-expanded slate material called Perma Till. Perma Till is a manufactured product that is very light and creates large pore spaces in the soil, promoting good drainage. The scree garden is home to number of familiar perennials like rudbeckias, gaura, salvias, and buddleia or butterfly bush. Grasses, of course, are also a part of the scree landscape. We also find less a variety of euphorbias, palms and agaves.

The Klein-Pringle White Garden is well known to garden visitors. This elegant garden was the original entryway into the arboretum and was inspired by the famed white garden at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, England. White gardens are beautiful both day and night. A wisteria-hung arbor and beautifully planted urns mark the entrance ways into the garden. It showcases white-flowered plants and plants with gray, white or silver foliage set against a dark background of hollies and conifers. A small lawn area surrounded by low stone walls provides a contrast to the bright flowers and foliage, and provides the perfect setting for a charming gazebo. A plant

palette limited to shades of green, white or gray enhances a sense of serenity, and a variety of plant forms and textures provides interest year round. A small patio paved with pale stones reflects the light colors of the white garden and reinforces the theme and calmness. A small water garden sits at a corner of the patio, overhung by magnificent Natchez Crapemyrtles (*Lagerstroemia* hybrid 'Natchez') with spectacular mottled bark.

A magnificent perennial border flanks the 300 foot axis of the arboretum. Planted in a mosaic of herbaceous perennials, shrubs, grasses and bulbs, the border shines year-round. A path alongside the border carries visitors through the arboretum and empties into the A.E. Finley Rooftop Terrace.

A rooftop garden can be a beautiful setting while it insulates the building and reduces urban heat load. Rooftop gardens also improve water quality by absorbing and cleansing runoff. The roof of the Ruby C. McSwine Education Center was specially designed and constructed to support vegetation. Layers of growing media, special drainage elements and protective roof membranes are hidden beneath the paved and planted surfaces. Planting beds contain a mixture of sand, a special heat-expanded slate material called permatill and organic material appropriate for use on green roofs. Rooftop conditions are typically quite hot, dry, and exposed to wind. The plants selected for these gardens must not only tolerate extreme hot conditions, but also act to moderate them to help protect the environment and make the area comfortable for the people who use the space. The plants also need to tolerate a great deal of precipitation at times. Many of the plants featured in the rooftop gardens tend to be shallow rooted and include a number of groundcovers like sedums, creeping thyme and portulaca. You can also grow a wide range of heat-tolerant perennials such as euphorbias, cacti and flowering herbs. The space is further enhanced by adding planted containers which allows us to further diversify the plant material and choose plants with deeper root systems.

The J.C.Raulston Arboretum is a plant-lovers paradise. In addition to the diverse permanent plantings, the arboretum is an official All-American Selections Trial Garden. Visitors can tour the trial gardens to see what new cultivars are coming to the market.

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3616)
OETA air date: October 17 and 18, 2009
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

New Plants in the Garden: Natives, Tropicals and Heirlooms – New and unique plants are found all around the world, and some, in our own backyards. Natives make wonderful additions to the home landscape as they are very well adapted to local conditions. One native that we recently introduced to our gardens is the Drummond's Aster (*Aster drummondii*). This perennial makes a delightful addition to the fall garden. It is very tough and will tolerate a variety of soil and light conditions. You can plant it anywhere from shade to full sun and it will bloom prolifically. The small, pale lavender blooms are produced in huge numbers, brightening up the fall shade garden.

Tropical plants offer bright blooms and a taste of the exotic. One of my favorite new additions

to the gardens this summer has been the *Charita* hybrid called 'Moon Walker'. This is a plant for the shade garden. It will tolerate deep shade to morning sun. It has several characteristics that help brighten up a shady spot including beautiful silvery leaves produced by hairs on the leaf surface. 'Moonwalker' bloomed much of the season with very large violet tubular flowers. The flowers have yellow and white throats and hang down from the stems. This is a very graceful plant to add to the shade garden.

Yellow Cestrum (*Cestrum auraniacum*) is another tropical that we have added to the studio this season. This plant thrives in heat and humidity. The brilliant yellow blooms develop in dense clusters that are arranged a bit like the blossoms of a lilac. Yellow Cestrum belongs to the Nightshade Family, Solanaceae. It is hardy to zone 8, so you may have luck wintering it in the southeastern portion of the state.

Another place that growers turn to find new plants is the past. Gardeners have grown numerous beautiful plants for centuries. Some of these have been passed from one garden to another, proving their worth over and over again. These heirloom plants are often quite vigorous and tolerant of insect and disease pests, as they thrived before chemicals were available. We have a southern heirloom dianthus growing here, which had been grown along the gulf coast for decades. Its deep green leaves tolerate the heat and humidity the south has to offer. And the spring floral display is incredible, gracing the plant with deep pink blooms.

SEEDS Program – In this segment we visit The SEEDS Garden, located northeast of downtown Durham, North Carolina. SEEDS is a non-profit community garden whose goal is to teach people to care for the earth, themselves and each other through a variety of garden-based programs. SEEDS houses two large garden spaces and directs a number of community outreach programs.

The Gardens at SEEDS include community garden plots tended by the local neighborhood and people from all over Durham. It also includes a cut-flower garden cultivated by DIG youth for the Durham Farmers' Market. DIG is a youth-driven, urban farming leadership development program. DIG stands for Durham Inner-city Gardeners. It is a program that empowers teens by teaching organic gardening, sound business practices, healthy food choices and food security values. The program emphasizes sustainable living and growing practices, ecological balance, and the natural recycling of organic materials for plant health and nourishment. In addition to growing cut flowers, DIG youth are paid a stipend to cultivate organic fruits, vegetables, herbs, and mushrooms, which they sell at the Durham Farmer's Market.

The Community Gardening program encourages Durham residents to produce their own food by providing growing space, advice, tools and other resources. SEEDS personnel believe in building community through the shared experience of gardening. A total of 25 spaces are rented out every year at a cost of $1-35 (sliding scale).

During our visit we speak with Lucy Harris, the Executive Director of SEEDS; Chris Pepe, a community gardener and SEEDS volunteer; and two of members of DIG.

Sarah P. Duke Gardens – In this segment we visit the Sarah P. Duke Gardens at Duke University in Durham. Often spoken of as "the crown jewel of Duke University," the Sarah P. Duke Garden occupies 55 acres in the heart of west campus. It is recognized as one of the premier public gardens in the United States, renowned both for landscape design and the quality

of horticulture.

The magnificent Terrace Garden is the oldest part of the gardens existing today. The Italian style terraces feature Duke stone and were designed by Ellen Shipman, a celebrated landscape architect known for the elegant private gardens she created. The terrace plantings change with the seasons and are brimming with a mix of annuals and perennials, making them burst with color. The long stairwell of the terrace descends to the Fishpool. The Fishpool is home to award winning water lily cultivars trialed in the gardens each summer. Water lilies from all around the world are entered in the trials. The immense South American giant water lilies (*Victoria* species) are quite a sight.

The Terrace gardens are flanked to the north by the W. L. Culberson Asiatic Arboretum. Begun in 1984, the 15 acre site houses more than 1,300 Asian species and cultivars including collections of deciduous magnolias, Japanese maples, conifers, daylilies, ginger lilies and tree peonies. The Asiatic Arboretum encloses a calm lake that reflects the surrounding tree canopy. The Asiatic Arboretum demonstrates the relationships between plants of Asia and North America, long separated through plate tectonics, which once grew side-by-side and are still remarkably similar today, despite 76 million years of separation. The Asiatic gardens are dotted with gates, bridges, stone lanterns, and water basins that compliment the plant collections.

The education and information hub of the gardens is the Doris Duke Center, which is surrounded by a number of specialized gardens including a new bog garden. This garden not only features some of North Carolina's endemic carnivorous plants, but a rich assemblage of water-loving perennials. The bog is fed from the beautiful Virtue Peace Pond above. The pond holds an extensive collection of hardy and tropical water lilies, lotuses and marginal water plants. It is the perfect spot to relax after strolling Duke's extensive grounds.

Cooking with Barbara – Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist, roasts pumpkin seeds.

Announcement – The Ozark Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society will host a meeting on Tuesday, November 3 at 8:30 a.m. at the Best Western Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The event will feature speakers presenting on landscape design, Japanese maples and heat tolerant rhododendrons. The event is free and open to the public. Rhododendrons will be available to purchase. For more information contact Len Miller at 918-791-1733 or e-mail lom35@groveemail.com.

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3615)
OETA air date: October 10 and 11, 2009
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

Butterfly Gardening with John Dole – In this segment we visit with North Carolina State University Professor John Dole to discuss butterfly gardening. John studied and enjoyed butterflies throughout Oklahoma before moving to North Carolina. His book *Butterflies of Oklahoma, Kansas, and North Texas* is a great introduction to butterflies throughout the state.

Butterflies require three things, like any animal, food, water and shelter. Adult butterflies

require nectar plants to meet their energy needs. A few favorites include zinnias, verbena, pentas and salvias. We discuss the differences between hybrid and species zinnia, looking at the Zahara Series and 'Profusion' hybrids. Butterfly larvae or caterpillars require host plants to complete their development. This means we need to tolerate a few holes in our leaves if we wish to encourage butterflies. Many caterpillars have a very narrow host range and require specific plants to complete their development. Most of us are familiar with common associations such as monarchs with milkweeds (*Asclepieas* species), swallowtails on plants in the carrot family, and fritillaries on passion vine.

A variety of products are available to encourage butterflies in the landscape. These include butterfly houses and butterfly feeders, both of which are fairly ineffective in the garden. You can make your own butterfly feeder by planting a profusion of nectar-rich plants, or by setting out plates of old fruit.

Oklahoma has 193 known butterfly species. The Oklahoma Biological Survey maintains a website (http://www.biosurvey.ou.edu/ok_butterfly.html) with records of butterflies in all Oklahoma counties. This is an excellent resource to find out who is flying in your corner of the state. There are many great places to visit to observe butterflies in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma City Zoological Park and Botanical Gardens house a butterfly garden, excellent for viewing these winged beauties. The *Oklahoma Gardening* studio gardens are also home to a butterfly garden that is always bursting with activity. In the Tulsa area, the Oxley Nature Center and, farther north, the Tallgrass Prairie Reserve are also great butterfly viewing grounds.

Be sure to bring a reference book along to help you in identifying the butterflies in your area. Late September and early October are also great times to watch for Monarch butterflies as they migrate through Oklahoma on their journey to wintering grounds in Mexico. Monarch butterflies will pass through by the hundreds of thousands.

Three-Cut Pruning with David Hillock – In this segment David shows us the three-cut pruning technique. If it becomes necessary to remove a large limb, do so using by using this 3-step method. The first cut is an undercut made about a foot away from the trunk across the bottom of the limb. The second cut is made further out on the limb from the first cut. This cut is made all the way through the limb removing the larger portion of the limb. The third cut removes the remaining stub and is made near the base of the limb just outside the branch collar. If you do not follow these three steps, often even on smaller limbs, the weight of the limb will split the limb at the halfway point and rip or peel the bark, leaving a gaping wound. Pruning wounds should be kept as small as possible. Do not cut flush to the trunk, even in the absence of branch collars. Instead, remove limbs with bulges (branch collar) flush to the bulge, not flush with the trunk. Remove limbs without the swelling almost flush with the trunk. For more information, see Fact Sheet – **HLA-6409 Pruning Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, and Vines**.

New Plant Introductions – In this segment we feature a very colorful group of plants from our new plants garden. First is a delightful phlox hybrid called 'Wanda'. 'Wanda' is a cross between the low-growing phlox species and a taller species with large flowers that seems to have adopted the best traits from each parent. Its large, fuchsia-colored blooms grace the plant spring through frost. 'Wanda' is a hardy perennial that performs well in full or partial sun.

We have a trio of new sun coleus (*Solenostemon scutellaroides*) adding a great deal of color to

the garden. 'Peter's Wonder' is a frilled delight with incredible pink, violet, cream and green colors. The doubly serrated leaf margins give the foliage immense texture.

We also have a Colorblaze™ coleus called 'Royal Glissade' from Proven Winners. This cultivar has jagged, moss-green leaves with raspberry veins and trim. It is certainly going to brighten up a shady corner of the garden, and will perform equally well in full sun. The name sun coleus is rather misleading, because the plants perform very well in shade, but their color is more intense in full sun. 'Royal Glissade' does not produce flowers so there will be no need to deadhead this cultivar.

The last coleus cultivar we have is called 'Tuckerman Ravine', also from Proven Winners. This cultivar is wild, wavy and full of color. Its leaves are irregularly speckled in yellow, green and red. Most of these cultivars reach a mature size around 2 feet, but can be cut back to keep them more compact. They work wonderfully in a mixed bed as well as in containers.

Gardenias (*Gardenia augusta*) are one of those plants that tend to be only marginally hardy in Oklahoma, especially in the northern portions of the state. However, over the past few years, breeders have selected plants that tolerate colder winter temperatures, allowing the plants to be planted more widely. 'Crown Jewel' is an extremely compact and cold hardy gardenia, hardy to USDA zone 7. Heavy June flowering will cover this plant in fragrant, double white blossoms. The dark, evergreen foliage adds winter interest to the landscape.

Cooking with Barbara – Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist, makes an Italian tomato sauce .

Announcement:
The Annual Tree Care Conference will be held October 28 at the Oklahoma State University Botanical Garden in Stillwater. Dr. Megan Kennelly from Kansas State University will be the featured keynote speaker. Dr. Kennelly is an expert in pine diseases, an issue of great concern here in Oklahoma. Other speakers will address such topics as managing tree caterpillars, ways to help trees survive severe weather, basic planting and care, among others. You can find more information at http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/images/treecare.pdf or contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404.

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3614)
OETA air date: October 3 and 4, 2009
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

Blades and Plumes, Fountain Grasses – When selecting flowering grasses for the garden, the most important characteristic to consider is the form or structure of the plant. Each species and cultivar has a unique architecture that can be put to work in the garden to fill a specific role. This week we take a look at fountain grasses in the genus *Pennisetum*. We will see how the various cultivars perform quite differently in the landscape.

These first two cultivars are very compact and low growing plants in the species *Pennisetum*

alopecuroides. There are a number of common cultivars, the two we have growing here are both dwarf varieties. We have 'Hameln' which forms a tight, 18 inch clump, and 'Little Bunny', which is smaller and reaches only about 12 inches. These cultivars form a strongly rounded form that contrasts the more upright form of many common landscape grasses such as Miscanthus. They make a very nice taller ground cover and are very useful in gardens with limited space.

The rounded form of 'Hameln' and 'Little Bunny' does not induce an image of a fountain. The common name fountain grass comes from the flowering habit of the grass. The furry plumes are produced in late summer into autumn on slender, arching stems. This graceful arching creates the fountain effect. The dwarf cultivars have rather stiff, upright stems and do not arch. 'Karley Rose' Fountain Grass does embody the fountain habit when flowering. This grass belongs to a different species, *Pennisetum orientale*, and is adored by gardeners for its pink plumes produced from July through fall. 'Karley Rose' grows a bit larger, reaching a height between 3 and 4 feet. It has a fine, delicate texture and the plumes look like they are almost floating on top of the foliage. 'Karley Rose' is very drought tolerant and is suitable for xericiscape gardens.

All three of these cultivars are cold hardy in Oklahoma: 'Karley Rose' is hardy to USDA Hardiness zone 6, 'Hameln' is hardy to zone 4, and 'Little Bunny' to zone 5. They provide year-round interest as they hold their foliage through the winter.

Another group of fountain grasses that we have in our grass garden are not winter hardy. These belong to the species *Pennisetum setaceum*. We must grow these grasses as annuals, which may seem like work to some gardeners when we have perennial grasses available, but this work is rewarded with striking, deeply colored purple or red foliage. 'Rubrum' is perhaps the most common cultivar of purple fountain grass. We just do not find this colorful foliage in any other grass. It makes a very bold statement in the garden when used as an accent. Purple fountain grass is very fast growing and will form a large clump 3 to 4 feet tall. It tends to hold a strong, arching, upright form.

One of the charms of purple fountain grass is the abundance of blooms. From mid-summer through fall, purple fountain grass is graced with numerous soft, purple-pink blooms that have sort of a fox-tail appearance. The plumes are followed by nodding seed heads. They move gracefully in the wind and add a great amount of color to the landscape.

This year we planted several other cultivars of purple fountain grass and have been very happy with their performance. Our student Horticulture Club was selling this cultivar at their annual plant sale and we just had to plant a few in our studio. It is a variegated purple fountain grass cultivar called '*Fireworks*'**.** The color of this cultivar is simply fantastic, with burgundy-colored mid-rib and hot pink margins! It is just striking. 'Fireworks' is slightly lower growing, reaching about 2 to 3 feet.

Another pair of purples we have is the 'Prince' and 'Princess' cultivars. These two cultivars are grown for their purple foliage. They typically will not flower here in Oklahoma, but they sure take the heat. While some other grasses lose their color when the temperature rises, these two grow deeper shades of burgundy and purple. 'Prince' has much broader, more upright leaves than other purple fountain grass cultivars and makes a very strong statement in the landscape. 'Princess' is a little daintier. It has narrower leaf blades and reaches only 2 to 3 feet as opposed

to 4 or 5 feet for 'Prince'. 'Princess' is well suited to planting in containers. Both of these cultivars are tender perennials, usually grown as annuals, but they are hardy to zone 8, so you may have success overwintering them in the southeastern part of the state, mulch the plants well to help insulate them over winter.

Finally, with a much more slender blade and compact growth habit, 'Little Red Riding Hood' makes an excellent selection for containers. Unlike 'Prince' and 'Princess', 'Little Red Riding Hood' will produce delightful plumes all season long. The dense, narrow blades have a delightful texture.

Cut Flowers with John Dole – In this segment we visit with an old friend of *Oklahoma Gardening.* John Dole, Floriculture Professor at North Carolina State University, is a former faculty member of OSU's Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department and a past guest on our program. In this segment he joins us to discuss cut flowers.

We begin with a discussion on some of the research being conducted with cut flowers, focusing in on extending vase life. We learn an interesting tip to keep our flowers looking fresh longer – feed them 7-Up, Sprite, or Sierra Mist! John helps debunk myths and wives' tales commonly followed for extending vase life.

We also take a look at some new cultivars hitting the cut flower scene, as well as a few plants that perhaps we wouldn't commonly think of for use in cut flower arrangements. Woody plant material adds structure and support to an arrangement. Plants such as the Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Diabolo® Monlo' and 'Coppertina') not only add upright structure, but also rich color in foliage. The brilliant yellow stems of 'Flame' willow (*Salix* hybrid) add striking color to an arrangement while providing a vertical element. Berries also make wonderful additions to a fresh or dried arrangement, including the brilliant fruits of the Winter Beautyberry (*Calicarpa Americana,* cultivar 'Welches Pink').

We also see some of our vegetable garden crops turning up in vases. Ornamental pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) cultivars, such as 'Hot Purple' are used for their brilliantly colored fruits. Even herbs such as 'Cardinal' basil (*Ocimum basilicum* 'Cardinal') are used, both for their foliage, but also for the delightful fragrance they bring to the indoors.

Some of our favorite cut flower plants are turning out in bold new colors including the deep red Echinacea 'Tomato Soup' and its magenta relative 'Merlot'. We also look at brilliant Gomphrena (*Gomphrena globosa*) cultivars 'Audray', a bright purple, and the pink-flowered 'Audray Pink'. Breeders look for long stems to cut, extended vase life, and sturdiness as they search for the next best cut flower.

We wrap up the segment with pointers on taking cuttings in the landscape. While the vase life of cut flowers varies considerable, you should expect purchased flowers to last at least a week in the vase. John encourages us to experiment with a variety of materials in the landscape for use in arrangements.

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Please contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Office for more educational information on garden-related topics. If you need further information about this week's show, call (405) 744-5404 or visit our website http://www.oklahomagardening.okstate.edu. Thank you for your continued support!