

Continuous Color in the Landscape
Important strategies toward year-round beauty in your yard

I. As you design, respect the true nature of gardens and landscapes.

Picture books lie - don't set yourself up for the fall!

A. Plan realistic bed size and color spots with impact.

1. Close at hand, 50 square feet may do it.
2. Most cases, minimum 200 square feet.
3. Color spots large enough to have impact, throughout the scene, at focal points.
4. Simple math for perennials & woodies: 30 weeks of color, 2 weeks per species.

B. Spend the time to do really careful plant selection.

1. Species that *thrive* where you put them, not just tolerate conditions.
2. Species that bloom at different times.
 - Perennials and woodies early and late.
 - Use annuals for mid summer.
4. Look for varieties with extended bloom and multi-season interest.

C. Design tips:

1. Start your design in winter with four-season elements, generously spaced.
 - Drop in spring: *Foliage* color and massed, irregular groups.
 - Blend in summer: Employ each item's shape and texture.
 - Brush in some fall leaf color, seed pods and motion.
2. Make good use of plant shape, texture, foliage.
 - Place distinctive focal points, with viewer angle and background in mind.
3. Don't create your own mess and summer color shortage.
 - Avoid "Designing at the garden center" & "Been a long winter" syndromes.
 - Accept it: In continuous bloom gardens 2/3 of the bed is done by August.
4. Double up wherever possible.
 - Spring bloomers can be summer zeroes; fall bloomers may be late risers.
 - Orchestrate the combinations. Pair them off these ways:
 - Compatible energy levels.
 - Larks and owls.
 - Elbow room: carpet plants and vase shaped plants ("wide skirt").
 - Shallow and deep roots.
 - Give doubled-up players a fair start.
5. In high summer, be wary of impulse changes. Summertime plant habit and human mood can be a bad combination.
 - It's usually smarter to *plan changes* in summer rather than make changes.
 - Visit other gardens. Make notes, not purchases.
 - Get a driver and tour the roadsides. Take pictures, research species.

- "Instant cures" acceptable in mid-summer, 'though pricey:
 - Annuals and houseplants always okay.
 - Self-sown perennials and annuals useful, too.
 - Non-plant accessories can be great additions
6. Understand that landscape is ever-changing. Learn to let go.
If it's beautiful today, plan now to change it, divide it, preserve it.
7. When you place new plants into an existing combo:
- Place plants in clusters, avoid spottiness.
 - Use the best long-season plants on the front line.
 - Bolster a good design with Shape-for-Shape replacements.
 - Avoid calling attention to plants going dormant.
 - Don't sacrifice next year's perennial bloom by overcrowding.
 - Never forget sunlight, soil and water requirements!

II. In daily care: Every combo is greater, given wise and timely maintenance.

A. What of "low maintenance"? A myth!

B. Wise maintenance is a simple routine. Attend to the "big 3" before the rest:

1. Watering - critical.
2. Weeding - critical.
 - Consider the definition of a weed, and fast growth of babies.
 - Raise those skirts!
 - Water first?
3. Pest management - critical.
 - *It doesn't* mean "go out and spray" but "Manage!"
 - To manage is to a) Watch, b) I.D. trouble, and c) Decide if/what to do.
 - Especially in summer, it's all about "Learn now, act next year."
 - No shame in simply hiding the worst-hit plants.
4. If water, weeds and pests are under control, move on to:
 - a) Mulching - the magic of new cover.
 - b) Fertilizing: Not an option in high-performance gardens.
 - 1/2 C 10-10-10 or 1C slow release/ 10 sq. ft . 2X year.
 - c) Dividing, rejuvenation pruning. The fountain of youth.
 - Don't deny it to your perennials and woody plants!
 - d) Deadheading. Do it, especially in June and July.
 - Observe the flowering pattern.
 - Cut to minimize seed formation.
 - Why eliminate seed? Why let it stay?

- e) Shearing to deadhead.
 - Perfect for some plants;
 - Practical for all if not always pretty.

- f) Cutting back, and cutting back hard.
 - To cut back removes some foliage.
 - Cut back hard removes $\geq 1/3$ the foliage.
 - 3 to 6 weeks for re-bloom.
 - Not every species blooms again.

- g) Pinching: For shorter, bushier and later blooming. Not just mums!
 - Learn by trying it on anything that blooms after mid-June.
 - Some plants lend themselves to it, some don't.

- h) Dead-leafing or "grooming."
 - Brown is a visually powerful color.
 - A healthy plant is always prettier.
 - Leaving ugly brown can compound problems.

- Staking.
 - Propping: ready-made stakes nice but best crutches are homemade.
 - *After* a fall: Don't bundle & tether. Make a pretty frame & stake to it.
 - Tying, staking and propping can be combined
 - Or just cut back the fallen plant!

C. Flexibility in maintenance - we need it!

1. Plants don't read their catalog descriptions.
2. Weather makes strange bedfellows.
3. Perennials are not permanent.
4. Flowers can be or have rough neighbors.

III. Most important plants to "find" for your garden:

A. Perennials that repeat bloom if cut back or deadheaded

B. Annuals for *late* Summer

C. Vines, shrubs and trees for *late* summer

D. Perennials for *late* summer

E. Tried-and-true combos for continuous color: The mixed border.

IV. Help in finding the perfect plant or combination:

A. Some Perennials that Repeat in August if Cut Back or Deadheaded

Cut back:

Blanket flower (*Gaillardia grandiflora*)

Coreopsis (A.K.A. tickseed, all species)

Evening & Day Primrose (*Oenothera* spp.)

False Sunflower (*Heliopsis* species)

Feverfew (*Chrysanthemum parthenium*)

Deadhead:

Golden Marguerite (*Anthemis tinctoria*)

Mountain bluet (*Centaurea montana*)

Perennial salvia (*Salvia superba*)

Perennial sweet pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*)

Veronica species (veronica, speedwell)

B. Annuals for *Late* Summer

Antirrhinum majus (snapdragon)

Calendula officinalis (pot marigold) self-sows

Callistephus chinensis (China aster) rotate to
new place every year

Canna x generalis (canna)

Catharanthus roseus (periwinkle)

Cosmos bipinnatus (cosmos)

Dahlia hybrids (dahlia)

Cleome hasslerana (spiderflower)

Gladiolus hybrids (gladiola)

Helianthus varieties (Ornamental Sunflower:

Italian White, Piccolo)

Impatiens species *I. balsamina* (garden balsam),

I. wallerana (impatiens)

Lantana hybrids (ham n' eggs)

Nicotiana glauca (flowering tobacco)

Portulaca grandiflora (Moss Rose) self sows

Salvia species (red salvia; herb sages)

Zinnia elegans (zinnia)

C. Vines, Shrubs and Trees for *Late Summer*

- Blue mist spirea/ Blue beard (*Caryopteris x clandonensis*) 3' Shrub; cut to ground or nearly every year; slow start in spring
- Bottlebrush buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) 6' Shrub; white flower in July often still showy in late July
- Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) 5' Shrub; cut to ground or nearly every year; slow to start in spring
- European spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*); Shrub to 12', no significant flower; brilliant pink seed pod
- Franklinia tree (*F. alata*) 15' tree, slow, rare; fragrant large white flowers
- Golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata* 'September') 20-25' tree, July flowers, August seed pods
- Hedge roses (*Rosa* species) many kinds; most less troublesome than hybrid teas; some flower only once but have bright red hips in August; others re-bloom as days shorten.
- Panicle/ Peegee hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*, *H. p. grandiflora*) 4-6' shrub, 10' tree form; white flowers early August fade to pink and tan (form *H. p. g.* Tardiva flower in September)
- Rose of sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) 6-12' Shrub; slow to start in spring
- Scholar tree (*Sophora japonica*) Low care 35' tree, white bloom in August.
- Seven son shrub (*Heptacodium miconioides*) 10-15' shrub; peeling vanilla bark, white & fragrant in August; pink pod.
- Silver fleece vine (*Polygonum aubertii*) white lacy flower; fast vine to 30'
- Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*) 4-5' Shrub; fragrant; hummingbirds
- Viburnum* species (many types) Shrubs to small trees, many with beautiful late summer fruit

D. Perennials for *Late Summer*

Plant name (*scientific* / alternate name); bloom color; light required*; notes re soil type and moisture*; other notes

* Light abbreviations: S - sun, HS - half sun, SH - Shade

* Soil type/moisture abbreviations: M - most soils, L - must have well-drained loam, A - average soil moisture, D - dry conditions, W - must be moist

- Allium* species (flowering onion); white/pink; 18-24"; S - SH; M; can be invasive by seed; (*A. senescens*, *A. sativa*)
- Artemisia* species (wormwood); insignificant flower; 1-5'; S; M, A - D; for grey foliage
- Aster* species (aster); violets, white; 1-5'; S; M, A; stake tall types; keep deadheaded
Shorter: *A. frikartii*, *A. amellus*; Taller: *A. novae-anglaie*, *A. novae belgii*
- Astilbe c. pumila* (Dwarf astilbe); pink; 18"; HS, SH; M, A - W; spreads more than other astilbe
- Blackberry lily (*Belamcanda chinensis*); orange+; 3-4'; S; M; each flower lasts one day
(candy lily - *Pardancanda x norrisii* - available in many colors)
- Blackeye Susan (*Rudbeckia* species); yellow; 3'; S; M, A - D; self-seeds rapidly
- Boltonia (*Boltonia asteroides*); white, pink; 3-6'; S, HS; M, W
- Cardinal fl. & Great blue lobelia (*Lobelia* species: *L. cardinalis*: cardinal flower; *L. siphilitica*, Great blue lobelia); red, blue; 3' - 18"; HS - SH; A, W; both species lackluster in sun
- Chrysanthemum* species (mum); many colors; 1-4'; S; M; many types not hardy; many late only if pinched
- Clematis* species (Virgin's Bower); many colors; 8-30"; HS, S; M, W; shade roots but top needs sun; deadhead large-fl'd. hybrids; later species (such as *C. viticella*) are smaller flowered; *C. heracleifolia davidiana* (fragrant blue bush C.), *C. terniflora* (fall C.)
- Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*); white; 4'; S - HS; M, W; stake in average to dry soil
- Daylily - late hybrids (*Hemerocallis*) many colors; 1-4'; S - HS; M, A; many late varieties are red flowered; yellow - Sept. Gold, Golden Prize / pink: Halls' Pink, Rhapsody in Pink / Red: Poin Set
- Fall fairy candle (*Cimicifuga simplex*); white; 24-30"; HS - SH; M
- Goldenrod (*Solidago* species); yellow; 18" - 4'; S - HS M, A; some species/types are invasive. *Not* an allergen.
- Grasses:
- Northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*); flat, green; 2'; S - HS; M, D - A; slow to form large clump
- Blue Oat Grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*); creamy; 2-3'; S - HS; M, A; neat; vertical; almost evergreen
- Maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*); white; 3-6'; S - HS; L; big show in winter
- Perennial fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*); silvery pink; 2-3'; S; M, A; confusing annual species
- Greyheaded coneflower (*Ratibida laciniata*); yellow; 4-5'; S; M; needs stakes or sturdy grass to lean on
- Hardy hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos*); red, pink, white; 3-5'; S; M, W; late start in spring - bare space

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Perennials for *Late Summer* (Cont'd.)

Hosta plantaginea (old August lily); white; 2'; HS - SH; M; fragrant flower

Japanese wax bell (*Kirengeshoma palmata*); pale yellow; to 3'; HS - SH; A, W; beautiful foliage

Japanese anemone (*Anemone hybrida*); white, pink; 2-3'; HS; M, A; blooms later in more shade

Joe Pye (*Eupatorium* species); violet, white; 3-6'; S; M, A to W by species;

E. maculatum (Joe Pye weed), *E. perfoliatum* (boneset), *E. coelestinum* (blue mist/perennial ageratum)

Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum compactum*); white; 3'; S - SH; M, A; can be very invasive; red seed pod

Late gentian (*Gentiana septemfida*); blue; to 18"; S, HS; M, W

Lilies - late hybrids (*Lilium*); many colors; 3-4'; S - HS; L, A; tend to look bare after flowering

Aurelian lilies: Green Magic, Golden Sunburst, Thunderbolt, Pink Perfection, Moonlight, Heart's Desire

Tigrinum (tiger) lilies: Cardinal, Cinnabar, Enchantment

Liriope muscari (Lilyturf); blue-white; 8-12"; S - HS; A; not a showy flower, a neat plant

Monkshood (*Aconitum*, late species especially *A. wilsonii*, *A. fischerii*); blue; 2-4'; HS, S; M, A; poisonous (all parts, eaten)

Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*, false dragonshead); pink, white; 2-3' ; S - SH; M, A; can be invasive (variegated type less so); white variety blooms weeks before pink

Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis* spp. *A. margaritacea*, *A. yedoensis*, *A. triplinervis*); white; 12" - 3'; S; M, A - D; dries in place; eaten early summer by Painted Lady butterfly (OK!)

Plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*); blue; 12"; SH - S; M, A; fall color; emerges late, covers spring bulbs

Plume poppy (*Macleaya cordata*); cream ages salmon; to 8'; S - HS; M; can be invasive

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*); pink, white; 3-5'; S, HS; M, A; deadhead to keep bloom into Sept.

Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*); lavender; 3-4'; S - HS; M, D; great grey fine texture foliage floppy in moist or rich site

Sea holly (*Eryngium* species *E. giganteum*, *E. oliverianum*); silver-blue; 3-4'; S; M, D; flowers will dry in place

Sedum x Autumn Joy (Cabbage Rose) pinks; 18" - 24"; S - HS; M; good cover over summer dormants

Stokes aster (*Stokesia laevis*); blue; 18"; S - HS; M, A; neat mounded plant, good blue

Tall phlox (*Phlox paniculata*, *P. maculata*); pink, white; 3-4'; HS - S; M; fragrant; many types susceptible to mildew

Toadlily (*Tricyrtis hirta*); mauve/white; 24"; HS - SH; M; very late bloom, also late start

Turtlehead (*Chelone* species); pink, white; 3'; HS, S; M, W; steady if slow spread but not truly invasive

E. Tried-and-True Combos for Continuous Color: The Mixed Border.

Listed here in visually attractive perennial groups by habitat. Each group makes use of shapes, textures, foliage colors, colors and forms of flowers as well as bloom season.

Perennials are listed in order of bloom within each group. Shrubs, vines, annuals and bulbs accompany each group: shrubs for background and body in winter, vines for verticality and surprise, annuals for those who *must* have bloom every day of the growing season, and bulbs (+) where they can be tucked in.

Full sun

pasqueflower: *Anemone pulsatilla* (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*) (1)

basket of gold (*Alyssum 'Sulphureum'*)+ (2)

zebra iris: *Iris pallida argenteo-variegata* (*I. germanica variegata*) (3)

purpleleaf beardtongue: *Penstemon 'Husker Red'* and other cv's (4)

threadleaf coreopsis: *C. verticillata* (5)

spike veronica: *Veronica subsessilis* (6)

gaillardia, blanket flower: *Gaillardia grandiflora* (7)

blackberry lily: *Belamcanda* spp., x *Pardancanda norrisii* (8)

butterfly bush: *Buddleia davidii*++ (9)

tall stonecrop, Autumn Joy: *Sedum spectabile* (*Telekium spectabile*) (10)

purple bush clover: *Lespedeza* spp. (11)

Full sun - Shrubs, Vines, Annuals, +Bulbs

dwarf lilac (*Syringa microphylla* cv.)

forsythia

late clematis (*C. viticella*, *C. texensis*)

ageratum / flossflower: *Ageratum houstonianum*

marigold: *Tagetes patula*

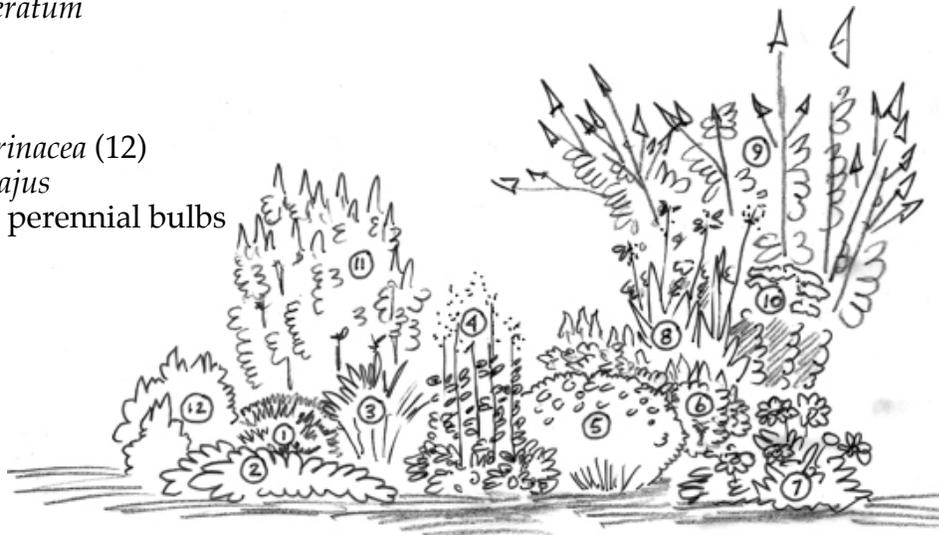
petunia: *Petunia multiflora*

salvia: *Salvia splendens*, *S. farinacea* (12)

snapdragon: *Antirrhinum majus*

++any / all spring-blooming perennial bulbs

+Peruvian lily



Dry, sunny areas - Perennials

- cushion spurge: *Euphorbia polychroma* (1)
Potentilla, herbaceous clump forming spp. (2)
lavender: *Lavandula angustifolia* (3)
pinks: *Dianthus* spp. (4)
sea kale: *Crambe maritima* (5)
mullein: *Verbascum* hybrids (6)
agastache: *Agastache* hybrids
lambs ear: *Stachys officinalis*
purple coneflower: *Echinacea purpurea*, *E. pallida* (7)
pearly everlasting: *Anaphalis* spp. (8)



Dry, sunny areas - Shrubs, Vines, Annuals,
+Bulbs

- blue mist spirea (*Caryopteris x clandonensis*)+
smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria*)
large-flowered clematis
cosmos: *Cosmos bipinnatus*
dusty miller: *Senecio cineraria*
globe amaranth: *Gomphrena globosa*
moss rose: *Portulaca grandiflora*
strawflower: *Helichrysum bracteatum*
+species tulips (*T. turkestanica*, *T. praestans*)

Sun, constantly moist to poorly drained -

Perennials

- globeflower: *Trollius* spp. (1)
Siberian iris: *Iris sibirica* (3)
border jewel: *Polygonum affine* (2)
meadowsweet, queen of the meadow, queen of
the prairie: *Filipendula* spp.
goldenrod: *Solidago* spp., clump-forming (4)
prairie dock: *Silphium terebinthinaceum*, other
Silphium spp. (5)
Joe Pye: *Eupatorium purpureum* (6)
hardy hibiscus: *Hibiscus moscheutos* (7)



Sun, constantly moist to poorly drained -
Shrubs, Vines, Annuals, +Bulbs

- redtwig dogwood (*Cornus a. elegantissima*)+
Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)
elderberry (*Sambucus* varieties)
canna: *Canna* hybrids
lantana: *Lantana* hybrids (8)
+quamash (*Camassia* varieties)

Full sun in Clay soil - Perennials

catmint: *Nepeta* spp. and hybrids (1)
gas plant, burning bush: *Dictamnus albus* (2)
daylily: *Hemerocallis* varieties (3)
false sunflower: *Heliopsis scabra* (5)
blackeye Susan: *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm'
perennial sunflower: *Helianthus x multiflorus*
Aster spp. and dwarf hybrids (6)



Full sun in clay soil - Shrubs, Vines, Annuals

bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*)
perennial sweet pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*)#
trumpet vine (*Camptis radicans*)#
creeping zinnia: *Sanvitalia procumbens* (7)
million bells: *Callibrachoa* cv's
spiderflower: *Cleome hasslerana*
sunflower: *Helianthus* cv's (4)
= Don't blame me when it runs amok!

Half shade - Perennials

leopardsbane: *Doronicum caucasicum* (1)
foamflower: *Tiarella cordifolia* (2)
fringed bleeding heart: *Dicentra eximia* (3)
bluestar: *Amsonia tabernaemontana*, *A. hubrechtii*
(4)
lady's mantle: *Alchemilla mollis* (5)
goatsbeard: *Aruncus* spp. (6)
masterwort: *Astrantia* spp.
bellflower: *Campanula*, short spp. (7)
meadow rue: *Thalictrum* spp. (8)
Culver's root: *Veronicastrum virginicum* (9)
coral bells, alum root: *Heuchera* cv's (10)
Japanese anemone: *Anemone japonica* (*A. hybrida*)+

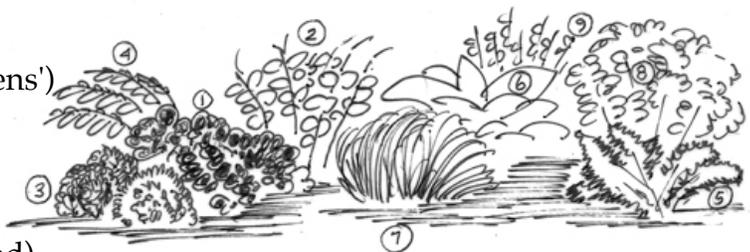


Half shade - Shrubs, Vines, Annuals, +Bulbs

seven son shrub (*Heptacodium micinoides*)
oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)++
goldflame honeysuckle (*Lonicera Heckrottii*)
Browallia cv's
edging lobelia: *Lobelia erinus*
heliotrope: *Heliotropum* cv's
monkey flower: *Mimulus* hybrids
periwinkle: *Catharanthus roseus*
+summer snowflake (*Leucojum* 'Gravetye')
++bluebells (*Campanulata scillioides*)
(++)Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Shade - Perennials

Lenten rose: *Helleborus x orientalis* (1)
black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon p. "Nigrescens"*)
baneberry, esp. red b.: *Actaea rubra* (2)
golden bleeding heart: *Corydalis lutea* (3)
variegated Solomon's seal: *Polygonatum odoratum variegatum* (4)
non-invasive ferns: (painted (5); leatherwood)
Hosta spp. (6)
lilyturf, variegated: *Liriope muscari variegata* (7)
blue bush clematis: *Clematis h. davidiana* (8)
Japanese wax bell: *Kirengeshoma palmata* (9)
toadlily: *Tricyrtis hirta*+



Shade - Shrubs, Vines, Annuals

European elder (*Sambucus racemosa*)
Ural false spirea (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*)
variegated porcelain vine (*Ampelopsis b variegata*)
climbing hydrangea (*H. anomala petiolaris*)
coleus: *Coleus* hybrids
impatiens: *Impatiens* cv's
wishbone flower: *Torenia*
+Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Dry shade - Perennials

bishop's hat: *Epimedium x rubrum*
starry false Solomon's seal: *Smilacina stellata* (3)
bigleaf forget me not: *Brunnera macrophylla* (1)
perennial geranium: *Geranium* spp.
tellima: *Tellima grandiflora* (2)



Dry shade - Shrubs, Annuals

deutzia (*D. gracilis 'Nikko'*)
polka dot- / aluminum plant (*Hypoestes*)

Moist to wet shade - Perennials

Christmas fern: *Polystichum acrostichoides* (1)
roger's- / finger flower: *Rodgersia* spp. (2)
fairycandle, snakeroot, bugbane: *Cimicifuga* spp.
leopardplant, gold groundsel: *Ligularia* spp.
Astilbe spp. and cv's (3)
turtlehead: *Chelone obliqua* (*C. lyonii*) (4)



Moist to wet shade - Annuals

spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)
caladium: *Caladium* cv's
wax begonia

Questions?

Email me at
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newsletter, too