

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



August 9, 2025

**Late Flowering Perennials Extend Color in the Landscape**  
**By Annette Meyer Heisdorffer**  
**Extension Agent for Horticulture Education – Daviess County**

In the spring, the landscape is covered with flowers, but what about the late summer and fall? Selecting other perennials that bloom in the summer and fall extends eye-catching color in the landscape. Chrysanthemums are the traditional fall flowers, but several other plants are also worth considering. If these plants are not available to purchase now, add them to the spring plant list. Remember, perennial plants live from year to year.

Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*), native to Kentucky, blooms July through September. The dense flower heads form at the end of stems and are made up of tiny, .33-inch pink-purple flowers. The plant reaches 2 to 7 feet tall, depending on the growing conditions and the cultivar. The plant grows 2 to 4 feet wide. It prefers full sun to part shade and moist soil, which means it will grow in rain gardens. It is certainly a butterfly magnet.

Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) is a past Perennial Plant Association's Plant of the Year. It has small, lavender-blue flowers beginning in late July through September. The tubular flowers appear along 12- to 15-inch stems that are produced above the foliage. When a leaf is

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

crushed, it has a pungent odor which reminds me of sage. The height of the plant may range from 3 to 5 feet. Russian sage performs best in full sun and in well-drained soil. The gray-white foliage and the long period of bloom make this plant very desirable. Also, the foliage can add winter interest to the garden. In the spring, cut the plant back.

A unique perennial for fall color is showy sedum (*Sedum spectabile*). The foliage is thick and fleshy. The leaves are silvery-green in color. Plant height ranges from 18 to 24 inches and has a mound growth habit depending on the cultivar and growing conditions. The 3- to 6-inch-wide flower heads form at the end of the stems. Flower colors available are red, pink, or ivory white. Showy sedum flowers attract butterflies which gather nectar from the blossoms. The showy sedum flowers can be used in fresh or dried floral arrangements.

Showy sedum requires little maintenance. Well-drained soil is necessary because it rots in poorly-drained soil. This plant grows in full sun or light shade.

Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*) blooms in late summer and fall. This plant prefers well-drained soil and can tolerate partial shade. The foliage forms a low-growing mound which may reach about 12 inches in height, depending on the cultivar. The tall flower stems allow the blossoms to gracefully tower over the foliage and give a light, airy feeling to the landscape. During flowering, the plant height may range from 2 to 4 feet, depending on the cultivar. The flower stems contain several blossoms per stem. Flower colors include white, pink, or rose. Two good cultivars of the Japanese anemone are September Charm and Honorine Jobert.

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Frikart's aster (*Aster x frikartii*) blooms in late summer to fall. The flowers are 2 to 3 inches across. The flower color may be lavender to lavender-blue with a yellow center.

Frikart's aster prefers well-drained soil and full sun. The height ranges from 2 to 3 feet.

The taller cultivars may require staking to keep them from falling over. Large groupings of Frikart's aster make a visual impact in the garden.

Michaelmas daisy or New York aster (*Aster novi-belgii*) blooms in late summer and fall. The flower colors for this perennial aster include violet, white, lavender-blue, or blue. The flowers are small, about 0.75 to 1 inch wide, and form a cluster that looks like a head. Cultivars with larger flowers are available. The height of the plant ranges from 1 to 6 feet, depending on the cultivar. The taller cultivars may require staking to keep them from falling over. This aster grows best in full sun and a well-drained soil. Butterflies are attracted to both types of asters.

For a location with shade, toad lily, (*Tricyrtis hirta*) adds color. It blooms in late summer to fall. The flowers have a white background with purple spots. The lily-like or orchid-like flowers are about 1 inch long. The arching stems reach 2 to 3 feet tall and spread 1.5 to 2 feet wide. The flowers appear toward the ends of the stems. These flowers are best observed up close due to their size. This plant prefers well-drained but moisture-retentive soil high in organic matter.

For more information about perennials that bloom in late summer and fall, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu).

**Annette's tips:**

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

To add color to the landscape with an annual flowering plant, try Celosia (*Celosia*) with its upright, spike-shaped flowers. It tolerates the heat of August and September and may last until frost. Flower colors include orange, red, or yellow. The flower plumes may reach up to 13 inches long. Plants with dark red leaf pigment instead of green add another color dimension to the fall garden. Celosia prefers to grow in full sun and well-drained soil. Transplants of celosia to plant into the garden soon are usually available locally.

## **Upcoming event:**

“First Impressions Count: a Behind the Scenes Look at Designing and Maintaining the University of Kentucky Landscape” will be presented by George Riddle. He will cover his thoughts and ideas across his career journey with a background in Landscape Architecture, including the grounds at the University of Kentucky. The program is scheduled for August 18 at 1:00 p.m. at the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service Office.

**This institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider.**