

COVER STORY: IN THE GARDEN



Ed Leong of Leong's Nursery has been bringing in 50,000 mini-plants every week to bulk up to the more than 500,000 pansies he will supply to the local gardening market.

IAN SMITH/PNG

Essential autumn garden tasks

Don't put away your planting tools yet; there are plenty of projects you can take on before the chilly days ahead. Steve Whysall dishes the dirt

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT

and petite but also hardier and sturdy enough to endure winter's chill. In hanging baskets, Leong used the Plentifall series, which is the first trailing series of pansies with a flat spreading habit and has been labelled the "no-fail trailing pansy with superior overwintering hardiness." The Matrix series is another excellent line that was developed by Peter Stefany, of Ball Horticultural, a company that decided more than a decade ago to do the hard work in order to produce a more robust pansy. "The goal was to produce easy-to-manage plants in the greenhouse," says Stefany. "The breakthrough occurred with a plant growing vigorously to the side without stretching upwards — even in tightly packed conditions. "We combined that key trait with superior branching, short flower stems and larger flowers and succeeded in meeting our goal." Leong's nursery is also one of the key producers of special fall containers, one featuring a mixture of perennials such as Sedum 'Angelina', creeping jenny, ajuga, and Acorus 'Ogon' and another with purple 'Jester' millet at the centre, surrounded by Heuchera 'Amber Waves' and silvery Helichrysum 'Icicles.' Adding hardy pansies to your window boxes or porch planters and finding a spot for ready-made winter container is just one of the gardening projects you can do this fall. Here's a look at other key projects.

Plant garlic

1 If you want a bumper crop next summer, now's the time to get the garlic cloves into the ground. There are basically two kinds -- soft-necked (Allium sativum) and hard-necked (Allium sativum var. ophioscorodon) garlic. The soft-necked kind can be braided because the stems are soft and pliable. This is the variety you mostly find at the supermarket. Artichoke and silverskins are the most common kinds grown commercially. Silverskins are whiter and the cloves are small and more uniform. Unlike the soft-necked garlics, hard-necks produce a stiff central flowering stem (scape) in June. Hard-necked garlics are the best kind for growing in cool-climate gardens, such as those in the Lower Mainland. There are various named cultivars: Russian Red, Georgian Fire, Persian Star, Rocambole, Spanish Roja, Carpathian and Bogatyr. Of the two types of garlic, the hard-necks are thought to have more flavour. You can also find purple striped hard-necks as well as some attractive polished looking ones called "porcelain garlic" that have a more tangy flavour. Music is one of the best cultivars in this category with a strong flavour, medium strength and large, easy-to-peel cloves. Other names to look for include Leningrad and Italian Porcelain. Hottest of the gourmet garlics are the

reds: Korean Red, Russian Red, Racey Red, and German Red. Plant garlic in well-drained, deep, fertile soil in a sunny location. Work the ground ahead of planting to make sure the soil is soft and loamy. Garlic is a heavy feeder, so work into the soil plenty of rotted compost. Break the cloves from the bulb. The small ones are unlikely to produce much of a bulb. Use these in the kitchen. The large cloves will give you a harvest. Put each clove into the ground to a depth of about five to seven cm (two to three inches) about six to 10 inches apart. Mulch after planting to give the cloves a little more protection from frost over winter. It does need to be watered regularly in spring. It hates to be left in parched soil. It is also irritated by weeds, so you need to be conscientious about removing any weed competition.

Lift and store dahlias

2 The traditional approach is to wait until frost turns foliage black and then dig up tubers, but this doesn't always happen in milder areas and it is also impractical for gardeners to wait around when they want the job done. Ideally, you want to lift tubers any time from the end of October to the middle of November. Before you start to dig, you need to cut away the foliage, which sometimes involves slicing off perfectly good flowers.



Leong's Nursery is one of the key producers of special fall containers that add colour and interest. These contain plants like Heuchera and millet.

Save these to display indoors. Snip away until you have reduced the plant to the bare bones of just the stems poking out of the ground. Don't use a garden fork. You risk accidentally piercing tubers with the prongs. Use a spade and dig deeply to lift the clumps. Start by working around the outside of the clump, about 15 inches from the main stem. Once you have completed a circle of the plant, you should find the

clump is loose enough in the ground to start lifting. Don't pull the tubers up by the main stem. Push your spade as deeply as possible under the clump, hold the stem and ease up the tubers, allowing the plant to go in the direction it wants to as you lift. This will prevent the stem tearing away from the tubers.

CONTINUED ON PAGES E 4-5

ATHOME


FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 | 2011 |

EDITOR BARBARA GUNN 604.605.2179 | HOMES@VANCOUVERSUN.COM


IN THE GARDEN




1




2




3




4




5




6




7




8




9




10




11




12




13



14



15



16

20

fall garden projects

For all the ideas and more photos, see pages E3-5

STEVE WHYSALL
VANCOUVER SUN

It's the last day of September. Did you think the gardening year was over? Think again. There are dozens of fall garden projects you can do over the next few weeks before the light starts to fade and the ground

gets chilled. In Burnaby, Ed Leong, owner of Leong's Nursery at Meadow Avenue, is busy bringing tens of thousands of pansies to perfection for the fall market. Leong is well known in horticultural circles for his expertise at growing the dainty pansy flowers for use in window boxes and containers as well as planted en masse in public flower beds to generate a splash of autumn and winter colour. He has been bringing in 50,000 "plugs" — mini-plants — a week

over the past seven weeks to bulk up to the more than 500,000 pansies he will supply to the local gardening market. Many of those plants will end up being used by professional landscapers to upgrade large urban garden-scapes at townhouse projects and commercial buildings around the city. Municipalities rely on Leong to provide them with all the pansies they need for beefing up flower beds for fall. But home gardeners are also big fans of fall pansies and

like to use them in window boxes and along with foliage specimens like heuchera, ajuga, euphorbia and ornamental grasses to create a colourful container that can last all winter. "Yes, we are well known for our pansy production," says Leong. "It is one of those plants that always gives good value for the money. "Most landscapers will be changing gardens over between Thanksgiving (Oct. 10) and Oct. 21 because the weather is usually still good and the ground is still warm, which

allows pansies to take root and get established before winter." There are umpteen series of pansies on the market — all slightly different hybrids. Series names include Supreme, Whiskers, XXL, Ultima, Panola, Mammoth Majestic Giant and Karma. Leong is a big fan of the Sorbet series, which is a more compact form of violas that are not only beautiful

CONTINUED ON PAGE E3

COLIN AND JUSTIN ONLINE		HOMES ON TOUR E8	SATURDAY IN WESTCOAST HOMES
Serving up inspiration When it came to redecorating a client's space, our design duo took their cue from a rather unlikely place: the woman's dinner dishes		Doors set to open The Vancouver Heritage Foundation's Laneway House Tour takes place tomorrow. We have the lowdown	Old-world charm in Vancouver The Granville Mews townhomes represent a new type of housing in their neighbourhood, but their design ensures they fit right in